

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Gulf Council Office

Tampa, Florida

June 3, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 11 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 12 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 13 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 14 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 15 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 16 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 17 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 18 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 19 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 20 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 21 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 22 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 23 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 24 Ed Walker.....Florida
- 25 Troy Williamson.....Texas

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 28 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 29 LT Jason Morton.....USCG

STAFF

- 32 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 33 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 34 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 35 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 36 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 37 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 38 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 39 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 40 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 41 Verena Wang.....Ecosystem Analyst

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 44 Mike Allen.....SSC
- 45 Frank Helies.....NOAA
- 46 Dylan Hubbard.....FL
- 47 Jessica McCawley.....FL
- 48 Clay Porch.....SEFSC

1 Jessica Stephen.....NOAA

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PAGE 17: Motion to approve the Framework Action: Other Shallow-water Grouper Complex Management Measures and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes to the document. The council chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. The motion carried on page 17.

PAGE 44: Motion that the council accept the SSC's recommendations as it relates to catch limits based on the MSY proxy based on F 40 percent SPR for scamp and yellowmouth grouper. The motion carried on page 46.

PAGE 74: Motion in Action 2 to make Alternative 3 the preferred alternative. The motion carried on page 76.

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1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 the Gulf Council Office in Tampa, Florida on Tuesday morning, June
3 3, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

4
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF APRIL 2025 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so we will call
10 to order the Reef Fish Management Committee. The first order of
11 business is the Adoption of the Agenda, which is Tab B, Number 1
12 in your briefing materials. Can I get a motion to adopt the
13 agenda? Motion by Dr. Sweetman. A second? Second by General
14 Spraggins. All right, and is there any opposition to that
15 motion? Seeing none, we'll consider the agenda adopted as written.
16

17 The second item on the agenda is the Approval of the April 2025
18 Minutes. That's Tab B, Number 2 in your briefing materials. Any
19 changes or edits to those minutes? Not seeing any, can I get a
20 motion to approve the minutes? Motion by Dr. Sweetman. A second?
21 Seconded by Captain Walker. Any opposition? All right. Seeing
22 none, we will consider the April 2025 minutes approved.
23

24 The next item on the agenda is Item Number III, which is the Action
25 Guide and the Next Steps. We're going to go ahead, obviously, and
26 kind of tackle these issues one at a time, but the first issue in
27 the action guide would be Discussion of the 2025 Recreational Gag
28 Grouper Fishing Season. That's Tab B, Number 4 in your briefing
29 materials, and I believe SERO staff is going to lead us through
30 that discussion.
31

32 **DISCUSSION OF 2025 RECREATIONAL GAG GROUPE R FISHING SEASON**
33

34 **MR. FRANK HELIES:** Good morning. Frank Helies, NOAA Fisheries. I
35 believe the presentation was sent around this morning. I'll start
36 with the last season, 2024. The ACL was 163,000 pounds, and this
37 was based on the payback from 2023.
38

39 The season was projected from September 1 to September 15, and the
40 total landings, the end of the fifteen-day season, was 252,367
41 pounds, which resulted in an ACL overage of 88,991 pounds, and the
42 accountability measure is payback off of the ACL.
43

44 For 2025, we used recent landings, actually 2022 through 2024,
45 three different projections. The private recreational landings
46 are tracked in the Florida State Reef Fish Survey units now, but
47 the for-hire landings, charter and headboat, are still tracked in
48 MRIP-FES. As you are well aware, we've had elevated fishing effort

1 in the last few years, due to the shortened seasons.

2
3 The ACL for 2025 is 399,000 pounds. This is going up each year in
4 the rebuilding plan. Now, taking off the 88,000-pound overage
5 from the ACL last year, it results in an ACL of 310,000 pounds,
6 and the ACT is 319,000, and that's reduced to 230,009 pounds, and
7 so, based on the projections, utilizing landings and catch rates
8 from just 2024, the season would last fourteen days, and so that
9 would go through September 14, which I believe is a Sunday this
10 year. If you use the past two years, 2023 and 2024, which have
11 been the shortened seasons, it would last twenty days.

12
13 We did announce the federal for-hire red snapper season would go
14 through September 15 this year, and so the season will overlap
15 with that, and so that's it for me. I'm open to any questions you
16 may have. Thanks.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Do we have any questions for Frank?
19 Dr. Sweetman.

20
21 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thanks for the presentation, Frank. At the
22 last council meeting, the council put forward an emergency rule
23 request for the bag limit reduction. Can you please speak to that?

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

26
27 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Thanks for the question, C.J., and so we
28 have prioritized the red grouper emergency rule, and have been
29 working on that, to get that in place. The agency hasn't, at this
30 point, made any final decision on whether to move forward with the
31 gag emergency rule, and so we're still reviewing that and
32 considering whether we can get it in place between now and the
33 start of the season.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J.

36
37 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just to follow-up, and so, by not including it in
38 your projections, is it safe to say that the bag limit is not going
39 to go into place?

40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No, that's not safe to say. Obviously, if you
42 include it in the projections, we would estimate the season to be
43 slightly longer, but one of the conversations we did have at the
44 last meeting was implementing the bag limit as an essentially,
45 buffer, or a way to prevent an overage from occurring, and so we
46 felt it was most important just to present the catches based on,
47 you know, just assuming the current catch rates and not a bag limit
48 reduction.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any further questions? Captain Walker, and then
3 Andy again.
4

5 **MR. ED WALKER:** So does this -- So are these decision points,
6 whether to do fourteen days based on the 2024 season or the twenty
7 days on the two-year average still, or has that been decided?
8

9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We actually put together a projection memo that
10 includes even more scenarios than this. Because the season has
11 been shortened the last couple of years, we feel like these are
12 the two most likely scenarios, and potentially, if, you know,
13 catch, or abundance, is going up, you could even see a higher catch
14 rate than what we saw in 2024, but I'm certainly happy to,
15 obviously, hear the council, if you want to weigh-in with regard
16 to the season length, but this is just kind of a range of scenarios
17 that we'll consider when setting the final season.
18

19 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you.
20

21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Any other questions for Andy or the
22 SERO staff? Andy.
23

24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No questions, but I just wanted to say a word of
25 thanks to the State of Florida and the Fish and Wildlife Research
26 Institute for the coordination on the landings estimates, and so
27 we got final MRIP landings back in -- Sometime in I think the
28 middle of May, and the State Reef Fish Survey relies on some of
29 the intercept data for that survey, and so they were able to turn
30 around their State Reef Fish Survey landings very quickly, and so
31 thank you for that.
32

33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you for those comments, Andy.
34 C.J.
35

36 **DR. SWEETMAN:** One final question. Do you have any idea, Andy,
37 when you would expect to potentially announce when the season would
38 be?
39

40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't have a final timeframe, but my goal is
41 to, obviously, announce it as quickly as possible, knowing that a
42 lot of people are going to want to be booking trips and planning
43 for the season.
44

45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so perhaps we can come back to it
46 in Full Council and have a little discussion about these two
47 scenarios, and maybe add a little value after we hear some public
48 comment as well. All right. Any other questions related to the

1 gag season? All right, I'm not seeing any, and so we will go ahead
2 and move to the next agenda item, and the next agenda item is Final
3 Action, Item V, and it's a Framework action for Other Shallow-
4 Water Grouper Catch Limits. Dr. Froeschke, if you can lead us
5 through the action guide.

6
7 **FINAL ACTION: FRAMEWORK ACTION: OTHER SHALLOW-WATER GROUPER**
8 **CATCH LIMITS**
9

10 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Good morning, and so we have prepared a draft
11 final action framework action for your review. This document
12 considers two actions, one to reduce the stock annual catch limit
13 for the four species in the shallow-water grouper complex and a
14 second that would modify the recreational -- Or establish a
15 recreational closed season for the recreational component of the
16 complex.

17
18 This is intended -- We started to work on this about almost a year
19 ago. This is intended to be an interim, or short-term, measure,
20 until such time the Reef Fish Amendment 58A could be completed.
21 That amendment considers things like splitting the complex,
22 further modifying the catch limits, perhaps based on the stock
23 assessment for scamp and yellowmouth grouper. It would potentially
24 modify the IFQ program to accommodate these changes in the complex,
25 and it would allow consideration of more specified management
26 approaches, for example if you wanted a recreational season for
27 just two species, or a single species in the complex, instead of
28 just managing all four species as a single entity, as we've done
29 now.

30
31 We have preferred alternatives for both actions, and so the plan
32 is that I'll present those, and you can have a discussion. If
33 you're satisfied with the document, you can recommend it for final
34 action.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So, again, as John said, we've got a document.
37 We've got preferreds, and there are two action items. One of them
38 essentially is dealing with the catch limits, and the other one is
39 on the season, and so do you want to just talk through each of
40 those action items, John, or I guess Emily will do the public
41 comment first.

42
43 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we
44 created a public hearing video for this. We also did a push
45 notification, through Fish Rules, to notify Gulf federal fishermen
46 of the proposed changes. We received sixty comments on this
47 framework action.

1 We heard general support for the framework action to reduce catch
2 limits while more complex management issues are thoughtfully
3 considered. We also heard a number of folks write in with support
4 for Action 1, Alternative 1, which is the no action alternative.
5 The rationale that was provided in some of those different letters
6 included that the complex is healthy off southwest Florida, and
7 scamp is consistent, and black grouper is actually increasing. We
8 heard that blacks and scamps are plentiful offshore in deep water
9 off Crystal River.

10
11 We heard that yellow mouth and scamp off of Louisiana are not in
12 decline. We heard that black and scamp limits should not be
13 reduced. We also heard that, if the species are not overfished or
14 undergoing overfishing, that their catch limits shouldn't be
15 reduced, especially using MRIP data.

16
17 We heard that the MRIP data is proven to be incorrect, and so no
18 action should be taken until more accurate data can be used. We
19 heard that catch limits should not be decreased based on faulty
20 data, and we heard that using faulty data to reduce harvest
21 undermines public confidence in the entire fisheries management
22 process.

23
24 We heard that no reduction should be made until SRFS data is used
25 to evaluate whether the stock is actually experiencing low
26 recruitment and/or low biomass. We heard that the council should
27 stop making reductions to quotas, because recreational anglers
28 fish for their own sustainability.

29
30 We also heard that Section 4 of the Restoring American Seafood
31 Competitiveness Executive Order mandates unnecessary and
32 overburden some regulations to be removed from America's
33 fishermen. Therefore, it is not justifiable to reduce harvest on
34 species that are neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing.

35
36 We heard that the council should take time to separate out species
37 in the complex and reduce harvest properly only for the species
38 that need it, and then we heard that reducing quota ruins families
39 and businesses. We also did hear some support for Action 1,
40 Alternative 2, and also for Action 2, Alternative 1, no action.

41
42 We also got some other comments as part of this solicitation. We
43 heard that all shortened seasons, including black gag, amberjack,
44 and other reef fish should be held in May, June, or July, and that
45 we should quit scheduling short seasons during peak hurricane and
46 tropical weather seasons in the fall.

47
48 We heard that recreational fishermen can only get out during good

1 weather, and so commercial fishing should not be favored by our
2 regulations. We heard that the commercial industry should be
3 reduced, and not the recreational fishery. We heard that sharks
4 cause way more problems with the fishery than fishermen, and that
5 the council needs to take further action to reduce shark
6 populations.

7
8 We heard that the gag season should be longer. We heard that the
9 recreational fishery should be managed using tags, and that the
10 fishery needs to be managed in zones, and that's it.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Emily. Any questions or
13 comments? Captain Walker.

14
15 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Emily. I just had a question. How did
16 the Fish Rules push that you put out there seeking comment work
17 out? A good response, or not so much?

18
19 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So, historically, we've gotten a really good sort
20 of click rate over from that. In this case, I asked them for the
21 analytics, and they were not able to provide them on time, and I
22 can double ask, and maybe get that for you by Full Council, but I
23 would say that, generally, it's a really useful metric for us to
24 -- Or a useful push for us.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any other questions for Emily? Okay. I'm not
27 seeing any, and so I'll hand it back over to Dr. Froeschke.

28
29 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Good morning. Bernie, can you pull up the document
30 and go to Action 1? So, again, there are two actions in the
31 document. I'll just kind of step through them, and so Action 1 is
32 a modification to the shallow-water grouper complex catch limits,
33 and so, again, this includes four species of scamp and yellowmouth
34 grouper, that were assessed together in this recent stock
35 assessment, and then black grouper and yellowfin grouper.

36
37 Yellowmouth and yellowfin grouper, just for your edification, are
38 very small component. The landings are a thousand, or just a few
39 thousand, pounds every year, on average. Black grouper is a
40 jointly-managed stock with the South Atlantic Council, and it has
41 been for a long time, and the stock assessment is quite old, and
42 FWC is working with some partners to try to provide some updated
43 scientific advice, in the hopefully not too distant future.

44
45 All that being said, the council has considered alternatives to
46 reduce it, and so the long and short of it is the current assessment
47 that was started, Reef Fish Amendment 58A, that's being worked on,
48 provided substantial catch limit reductions for the scamp and

1 yellowmouth grouper complex, based on the results and the SSC
2 recommendations.

3
4 What this document tries to do is develop catch reductions that
5 are compatible with that, until such time we get that document
6 completed, and so there was some work done, and, essentially, the
7 recommendations were scaled, and it results in a 54.7 percent
8 reduction, is the catch limit that would need to be achieved, catch
9 reduction that would need to be achieved, to be consistent with
10 that.

11
12 There were different ways that was calculated. The most
13 straightforward ways you take the existing complex ABC, which is
14 the 710,000 pounds, and that was reduced by 54.7 percent, and
15 that's Preferred Alternative 2, and so that gets you the stock ACL
16 of 322,000 pounds, and then the commercial component of this is
17 managed through the IFQ program, as it has always been, or at least
18 for the last fifteen years, and so the commercial ACL was split
19 off in the same manner that it always has been, and so it's about
20 -- It's predominantly commercial, and then the remainder is for
21 the recreational harvest, and so I'll stop there.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Again, so we're
24 going to work through both of these action items, and we've had a
25 fair amount of discussion over the last council meetings on both
26 of them. We have preferreds in both cases, and so any discussion
27 on this particular action item? Okay. I'm not seeing any. John,
28 we'll go ahead and move to Action Item 2.

29
30 **DR. FROESCHKE:** All right. If you can scroll to Action 2, please,
31 and so Action 2 addresses a recreational fixed closed season for
32 the recreational component of this complex, and so we've not had
33 a recreational season before.

34
35 The history of this is the 710,000-pound ACL that we have now has
36 never been closely approximated. Much of that original ABC, or
37 ACL, was based on black grouper landings that were probably higher
38 than historically estimated, and so that's why we've never really
39 approached that.

40
41 This reduction in Action 1 would require a closure, at least for
42 some part of the year, to avoid exceeding this new ACL, and so,
43 the way that the action is structured, there are I think five
44 alternatives, but they're -- Each one of those contingent on the
45 ACL selected in Action 1, and so, if we look through the document,
46 you can see there's a top row, for example, and Preferred
47 Alternative 3 was based on Action 1, Alternative 2.

48

1 This would open the season July 1, and it would remain open through
2 December 31 of whenever this is implemented, assuming 2026, and
3 the accountability measures do not provide for in-season
4 monitoring, and so it would just -- That would be the season.

5
6 The council looked at several different alternatives, and
7 considered opening earlier. June is the month with the highest
8 catch rate. They talked about split seasons, opening earlier, and
9 then that may not fully harvest all the quota, and, ultimately,
10 you all decided, at least at this moment, on July 1, and so that's
11 where we're at.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, John. Dr. Sweetman.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks for the discussion, Dr. Froeschke, and so my
16 question kind of relates to a little bit of a process question
17 here, and so I'm curious about -- So, obviously, we've got a stock
18 assessment that shows declining catch streams for scamp and
19 yellowmouth, but, at the same time, we're setting a recreational
20 fishing season by applying this to the entire shallow-water grouper
21 complex for black and yellowfin, where there's not really a concern
22 at all with those stocks.

23
24 I'm wondering about the possibility of having separate seasons, as
25 it relates to black and yellowfin, and that's set up a little bit
26 differently. I get the concern, where we're going with scamp, and
27 we need to address that, based on the new catch limits that we are
28 going to put in place following that stock assessment, but I'm
29 curious if it's even feasible.

30
31 I know this is kind of a stopgap measure, until we get to 58A,
32 where we can potentially look at that a little bit closer, but I'm
33 curious your thoughts, Dr. Froeschke, about the potential for
34 having black and yellowfin not being bound by the season structure
35 here, since that's not the concern, and I think they're only about
36 2 percent of the entire landings for that stock complex.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Is that a question for John?

39
40 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Okay. A couple of things. Two parts. Is something
41 like that possible? Yes, and someone can correct me. Is it
42 possible within the confines of what's allowable in a framework
43 action that we're considering here? No, and so that would require
44 -- Essentially, you would modify the complex, which is part of
45 Amendment Reef Fish 58A.

46
47 You could split them, make them however you saw fit, and then you
48 could implement specific seasons, or regulations, species-by-

1 species, or subcomplexes, or however you wanted to do that.

2
3 Within this, I don't see that as possible, simply because that's
4 how it's managed. It's the same reason you couldn't just say, I
5 want recreational management for some species, and just do it that
6 way, when we don't currently have it. I mean, you could do it,
7 but you've got to go through a process to make that happen. That's
8 sort of how I see it.

9
10 I guess a little bit more background on the black grouper. Like
11 I said, the yellowfin grouper is minor, like a thousand pounds.
12 My recollection is black grouper landings are around 30,000 pounds
13 a year, and is that right? Which is so about 10 percent of the
14 recent landings for the shallow-water grouper complex. Most of
15 those are commercial.

16
17 I think that the recreational is highly variable. It's a rare-
18 intercept species, all that. Just for information, we did, as
19 part of this process, when we were working on 58A, before we kind
20 of worked through some of these challenges -- The SSC did look at
21 providing new catch advice for black grouper and yellowfin grouper.
22 I think, Ryan, and you can check, and I think it was based on the
23 Tier 3b, Tier 3a or 3b, and you would have to check, but there was
24 some concern, at least based on the data we had, that there was a
25 long-term decline in the landings, but we're not sure.

26
27 Some of that I think was attributed to how the landings were
28 partitioned between the South Atlantic and the Gulf. The other
29 part, I think, is less certain, and I know there's some ongoing
30 work, but, again, I mean, just to answer your question, yes, it's
31 possible, and I don't think it's here. Just if you -- You know,
32 this is intended to be a shorter-term measure, and so however you
33 all want to deal with that.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker.

36
37 **MR. WALKER:** I kind of agree with Dr. Sweetman there. I don't
38 know that the council would have a good explanation for black
39 grouper closing when there's nothing wrong with them. I get that
40 they're part of the complex, and so we're kind of stuck with it.
41 When could we -- If we move forward with this as it is now, when
42 would we be able to separate blacks out, or what's the timeframe
43 for splitting the complex here, and I have another question after.

44
45 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, what we talked about most recently, before
46 we started this last summer, or fall, when we talked about this,
47 it's that Amendment 58A wouldn't be implemented, at the earliest,
48 until 2027, and so we would work on this document for 2026, and

1 then that could be in effect in 2027.

2
3 **MR. WALKER:** So we could have a couple of months of -- Or a half
4 a year of closed black grouper, with nothing at all wrong with the
5 stock, in theory.

6
7 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, it would be a six-month closed season for
8 recreational black grouper.

9
10 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and I don't think that's right, but okay, and
11 the separate question is I was looking at the numbers for -- We'll
12 call it scamp, and the difference between the season length, if we
13 open it in June, versus July, was eighty days, and is that
14 accurate, just because of the catch rates, I think, because red
15 snapper opens in June for a lot of people.

16
17 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I would have to check the days, and I don't have
18 them off the top of my head, but June is by far and away the
19 highest catch rate for --

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** Right, because I had -- I pondered that for a while,
22 because, you know, a lot of the red snapper guys are catching scamp
23 anyway, which has a pretty high discard mortality rate, and we've
24 -- Coming out of the recreational initiative, there was a lot of
25 interest in, you know, stacking the seasons together, to the extent
26 possible, but I don't know that anybody would be in favor of it if
27 it was more than two months difference in season length, based on
28 opening it thirty days earlier. It seems like a lot, and so I
29 went -- In my mind, I went with the longer season, but I'm just
30 surprised that it was that much of a difference in the season
31 length, based on that timeframe.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So I just want to be careful. Do you want to go
34 ahead, John?

35
36 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I'll just say that Table 2.2.1 has the
37 information, if you want it.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Well, let's go ahead and address the
40 season length. Bernie, can you pull up Table 2.2.1 in the
41 document? So, as Dr. Froeschke pointed out, really, what you need
42 to do is pay attention to the top row in this, and so it's 106, as
43 opposed to 184, days, Captain Walker.

44
45 Okay, and I just want to be really careful here, and so, I mean,
46 we're going to have a discussion, further down along the agenda,
47 having to do with the timing and the development of 58A, and I
48 think this is probably more appropriate for that particular agenda

1 item.

2
3 I mean, I think what we recognize now is that we need to move this
4 framework action forward. We've got two action items. We've got
5 some preferreds, and we definitely need to put that in place,
6 regardless of what we do with Amendment 58A, and so, at this point,
7 I guess, is there -- How do people feel about those preferreds, or
8 is there any opposition to try to moving this forward, and, if
9 there's not really, then we could probably use a motion to finalize
10 this framework action. Captain Walker.

11
12 **MR. WALKER:** I just would put out there that I'm not opposed to
13 that. I was just clarifying something. Given the choice, I would
14 recommend that we go with that season. If you need me to make the
15 motion, I suppose I will, unless there's opposition.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

18
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
20 I was a little bit confused. Were you suggesting changing the
21 alternative, preferred alternative, or you were suggesting the
22 motion to move the document forward?

23
24 **MR. WALKER:** No, and I would move the document forward. I'm not
25 looking to change anything. I'm just pointing out something that
26 --

27
28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So, Bernie maybe will help you out,
29 if there's no more discussion on the alternatives.

30
31 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and that would be wonderful. I guess make the
32 preferred --

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I guess what you were going to -- The motion
35 that we need is to recommend that the framework action moves
36 forward. When we get that up though, we'll also -- Before we
37 actually vote on that, we have to have a short discussion on the
38 codified text. We're going to have to pull that up as well, but,
39 in the interim, C.J.

40
41 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and just -- I guess I understand about how we
42 need to move forward on this relative to the scamp assessment, and
43 it applies to the entire complex. I will say it is entirely my
44 intent for, when we do move forward in 58A, to try and deal with
45 the black and yellowfin season issue there, because that just seems
46 silly to me, that we would need to move forward on that right now,
47 when there's no concern with those two fisheries.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, C.J. So, again, it's a relatively
2 simple framework action here, and there's a couple of changes, and
3 they're minor, to the codified text, and if you can keep scrolling
4 down, Bernie. Right there. Mara.

5
6 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Thanks. I just wanted to mention, not related to
7 the codified text, but the actual document, and so, right now, in
8 the background section, it doesn't discuss what the SSC recently
9 did in terms of making new catch level recommendations, and so I
10 just wanted to let you know that I'm going to ask that that history
11 be added.

12
13 It doesn't have to change anything in the document, but I think we
14 need to acknowledge what it says here about the SSC's
15 recommendations are not the current recommendations, which you'll
16 be talking about in a bit, and so I just wanted to let you know
17 that given -- That's what I would suggest, that staff make changes
18 to the document to reflect that updated history. Thanks.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So, Mara, I'm just getting a couple of looks
21 around the room, and so, again, what is the -- What is the addition
22 of that information to add to the process here?

23
24 **MS. LEVY:** It doesn't add anything to the process. It's just that
25 you're voting to take final action and give staff editorial license
26 to make updates to the document, and so I'm just letting you know
27 what I'm going to ask that they include in the update, which is
28 the more recent information about what the SSC just recommended,
29 because, right now, it ends with the SSC made these recommendations
30 for the complex, and that's no longer the most current
31 recommendations, and so I think the history needs to reflect that
32 we have more information, but we don't have to make changes to the
33 actions or things like that.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

36
37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
38 I understand where you're going, but I think we should have the
39 council receive those, and ask questions, and then figure out what
40 could or could not change, based on the outcome of this meeting,
41 and then what we would actually put in a document they're taking
42 final action on. It just seems a little cart before the horse,
43 and confusing right now, until we have the council look at those,
44 ask questions, and direct staff on what they want to do with 58A.

45
46 **MS. LEVY:** That's fine, except the SSC's recommendations are the
47 SSC's recommendations. Like, I'm not saying dictating what
48 exactly we have to put in it, but we need some further discussion

1 about the current status of the catch level recommendations, and
2 we can add what the council discussed. We can decide what to add,
3 but it's a little bit misleading to leave it as it is, when we've
4 had further developments related to those points.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, again, the way that the motion is
7 ultimately going to read, right, is that there's -- Staff and the
8 council chair will have editorial license here to incorporate that
9 into the codified text, and so I think we're on solid footing.
10 You know, I just -- I think people are a little confused of where
11 we were actually trying to put this in, but, for now, so -- Having
12 gone through the codified text, and having had that discussion, if
13 we can go back to the motion, and, Ed, if you want to read that
14 motion into the record.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** All right. **The motion is to approve Framework Action:**
17 **Modifications to Other Shallow-Water Grouper Complex Management**
18 **Measures and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for**
19 **review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary**
20 **and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the**
21 **necessary changes in the document. The council chair is given the**
22 **authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary**
23 **and appropriate.**

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Captain Walker, and so
26 we've got a motion on the board. Is there a second for that
27 motion? It's seconded by Mr. Anson. Is there any further
28 discussion on the motion? **Not seeing any, is there any opposition**
29 **to the motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.** All right,
30 and so we will now move on. Captain Walker.

31
32 **MR. WALKER:** Is there any way here that we could at least clarify
33 our desire to get blacks removed from this as soon as possible, or
34 -- I mean, I know it goes without -- I would like to be able to at
35 least demonstrate that this is our intent down the road.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure. Dr. Froeschke.

38
39 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Thank you. Well, a couple of things. In Amendment
40 58A, that I think we'll discuss here, it would split it into two
41 complexes. We don't currently have any action that would consider
42 a subsequent recreational season for the black grouper and
43 yellowfin grouper complex, and so, unless you would develop an
44 action to make a recreational season for that, there wouldn't be
45 one, is currently how the document is structured.

46
47 Essentially, once that is in place, this would go away, and then
48 it would only be what you would start with, and so you're

1 essentially --- You would -- You know, it's a clean slate, and you
2 can make it how you want, or omit things that you don't have any
3 interest in.

4
5 **MR. WALKER:** Right, and that's 2027 though, right? My interest is
6 we've got to go a year-and-a-half explaining why black is closed
7 for half the year, for no reason whatsoever, and, at least if we
8 could put it on record that we're interested in doing that as soon
9 as possible, somehow, to explain why we just voted to close black
10 grouper for no reason, that would -- You know, it would seem like
11 the right thing to do.

12
13 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, just as a quick follow-up for the math, so
14 it wouldn't be in effect in 2025. It would be in effect for 2026,
15 and, in theory, it would -- So it be one go-around of the season,
16 is how we envisioned it.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, John, for that clarification. Dr.
19 Freeman.

20
21 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Sure. Just for clarification, so there is an
22 action that is phrased as establishing a fixed recreational closed
23 season for the scamp complex and the black grouper complex in 58A,
24 and so, once we get to that document, that will be a question I'll
25 pose, is the possibility of adding an alternative with different
26 seasons for the two established complexes.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Ed, you can chew on that for a little
29 bit. We're going to come back to 58A. Mr. Chairman.

30
31 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. A question, and, you know,
32 I'm wondering if there's some benefit to Ed's comments for the
33 State of Florida to open state waters for -- You know, it's just
34 a question. I don't know if that would justify, or help one
35 season.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We'll go ahead and let C.J. answer this, or
38 address this, question, but I guess what I want to do though is
39 kind of reel back the discussion, right, because it really needs
40 to happen in the discussion as it relates to 58A, but go ahead,
41 C.J.

42
43 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree. I mean, that's certainly
44 something that our commission could look at. I do think a vast
45 majority of the landings do come from federal waters, and so I
46 will throw that out there, but it's certainly something our
47 commission could look at.

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, again, we will jump back on this
2 in a little bit, but for the time being, we're going to go ahead
3 and move to our next agenda item, which is Agenda Item Number VI,
4 and that's a Summary of the May 2025 SSC meeting, and Dr. Allen,
5 the chair of the SSC, is going to give a presentation. That's Tab
6 B, Number 6(a), but do you want to walk through an action guide,
7 Ryan, on that?

8
9 **SUMMARY: MAY 2025 GULF SSC MEETING**

10
11 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Sure. Generally, what we're going to do with
12 this, and so Dr. Allen will cover the SSC's discussions of -- As
13 far as like for all the SSC items, the scamp and yellowmouth
14 projections, the Center for Independent Experts' peer review of
15 shrimp bycatch estimation methodology for finfish species, new
16 bycatch estimates and analyses for sawfish and manta Ray, and a
17 review of a population viability analysis for endangered and
18 threatened species that interact with shrimp, and he'll also cover
19 the revised red grouper projections.

20
21 For this particular item though, he's just going to focus on the
22 shrimp items. When we get to 58A, Dr. Allen will talk about the
23 revised scamp and yellowmouth projections, and then, when we get
24 down to Item X, for the red grouper documents, that's when he'll
25 talk about the revised red grouper projections, and so it will be
26 kind of broken up throughout the day.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Ryan, for that. Mike, it's
29 all yours.

30
31 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning,
32 everyone, and so I'm going to -- As Ryan said, I'm going to
33 summarize our discussions on the May 8 meeting. It's at several
34 places today, but, at this point, I'll start with the shrimp
35 bycatch, and so, if you could, Bernie, go to slide 8. This one.
36 Okay. Thank you.

37
38 So we had three agenda items here. The first one was to review
39 the CIE independent peer review of the shrimp bycatch estimation
40 methodology. We had a presentation by Dr. Steve Smith from the
41 University of Miami about the new methodology, and we had some
42 discussion here.

43
44 I'll just let the council know that we ended up being very crunched
45 for time on these three topics, and I don't feel like we fully got
46 a chance to review the methodology for the finfish bycatch, and
47 I've asked the council staff to get this on an agenda again, for
48 us to discuss it again, because we didn't make any motion about

1 the finfish bycatch, and I don't feel like we had the time to
2 really dig into it, and so we're hoping to address that one in the
3 future, and so I'll leave that one.

4
5 We did review a presentation about bycatch estimates for smalltooth
6 sawfish and giant manta ray, and became aware of some of the
7 concerns there for these species that have ESA considerations, as
8 well as Dr. John Carlson presented the population viability
9 analysis for endangered and threatened resources that interact
10 with the shrimp fishery, and that was smalltooth sawfish and giant
11 manta ray as well, and so we had good presentations there, and
12 some excellent discussion about bycatch of these endangered
13 species consideration, and I'll go to the next slide and talk about
14 our motion there.

15
16 I'll just read that. The SSC reviewed the population viability
17 analysis, and population viability analysis is a way to -- It's
18 sort of like a stock assessment, but it's a population modeling
19 approach to look at how viable it is, mainly for endangered and
20 threatened species, and so it's a pretty well-established set of
21 models for those kinds of investigations.

22
23 The SSC reviewed the population viability analysis for smalltooth
24 sawfish and concluded that it represents a useful analysis for
25 understanding impacts of bycatch and other mortality sources on
26 population viability. The SSC encourages cooperative research and
27 targeted data collection, as well as increased observer coverage
28 in areas of high bycatch, evaluation of uncertainty around bycatch
29 source estimates, potential impacts of range expansion, and
30 particularly that was with smalltooth sawfish, was the discussion
31 there, and a continued refinement of effective population size
32 estimates. Ultimately, continued development of this approach
33 could be used to inform bycatch mitigation measures for fisheries
34 in the Gulf.

35
36 This was just a generalized motion saying that we felt like this
37 was useful information. It wasn't ready for any adoption in
38 management, or implementation, because of the uncertainties listed
39 here in the motion, but we felt like it was a good analysis that
40 just needs further development for use in management, and so that's
41 where we left it, and this motion carried without opposition, and
42 so I'll be happy to take any questions, and that's it for this
43 item.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Are there any questions for Dr.
46 Allen? I've just got a real quick one, and so, with regard to the
47 range expansion for the sawfish, did you guys actually have some
48 data that suggests that that's occurring?

1
2 **DR. ALLEN:** We didn't see any data, but John Carlson mentioned
3 that it was occurring, and several members of the SSC were aware
4 of sawfish being caught further north, and being, you know,
5 interacted with, and seen, further north than they had been over
6 the last ten to fifteen years, but we didn't have any data showing
7 a range expansion in that discussion.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thanks. Mr. Strelcheck.

10
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I just wanted to provide some context, and not a
12 question to Dr. Allen, and so I appreciate the SSC's review. We
13 don't typically deal with a lot of Endangered Species Act issues
14 at this table. It's infrequent.

15
16 We have to do biological opinions under Section 7 of the Endangered
17 Species Act. Essentially, those are an authorization to allow for
18 a fishery to continue, and take endangered species at levels that
19 we don't believe will put the species at risk of extinction, based
20 on their threatened or endangered status, and so we are in the
21 process of collecting a lot of information.

22
23 I think it was a year or two ago that we came to the council and
24 kind of laid out a roadmap of some of the analyses and things that
25 needed to be completed before we began that consultation, and this
26 is part of that package, and so we expect probably to make a
27 request for the August meeting, to then come to the council and
28 discuss this in a little greater detail. We're not in disagreement
29 with the SSC's findings, right?

30
31 We can always refine and improve the analyses, and so this will
32 all inform that biological opinion for the shrimp industry, and,
33 although the motion focuses on smalltooth sawfish, it's bigger
34 than that, and then it also includes giant manta rays, and we don't
35 have graphics for the council here, but we do have observed takes
36 of smalltooth sawfish that are occurring primarily in the pink
37 shrimp fishery off of the dry Tortugas, southwest Florida, and,
38 for manta rays, it's off of the Mississippi River delta, and a
39 little bit off of North Carolina, and so we will have to look at
40 ways to mitigate that, and address that, and that'll all be
41 encompassed within our biological opinion and work that we can
42 coordinate with you going forward.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thanks, Andy, for that information. Dr.
45 Sweetman.

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** A quick question for you, Andy. Do you know what
48 the observer coverage is in the shrimp fishery?

1
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't offhand, but it is very low, right, and
3 so we do have a small number of observations that have occurred in
4 that shrimp fishery.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Any further questions? Dr. Simmons.

7
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so our SSC
9 kind of focused on the information that was presented in the Gulf.
10 This also had some information that was interactions that occurred
11 in the Atlantic, and so, I guess, does anyone know, Florida folks,
12 or Jessica, if the South Atlantic, or Andy, is going to have their
13 SSC take a look at this as well and provide any recommendations
14 regarding these interactions in the South Atlantic, because I think
15 the smalltooth sawfish covers both the Gulf and South Atlantic.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Jessica.

18
19 **MS. JESSICA MCCAWLEY:** On the sawfish, I'm not sure about the
20 sawfish. I know that we've gotten a report on the manta ray, and
21 we are looking at that interaction in the Mackerel Committee next
22 week, and so we are discussing that further. Our AP has discussed
23 that interaction, and provided some recommendations to the
24 council, but I'm unsure about sawfish. I need to dive into that
25 a little bit more.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any other additional information, Andy, on your
28 side?

29
30 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'll just add that we do provide the South
31 Atlantic Council a quarterly report for their meetings on protected
32 resources issues, and we will continue to coordinate with them. I
33 don't know about whether this is an SSC agenda topic, but certainly
34 we can broach that subject with them.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

37
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Sorry, and so if -- I mean, I think
39 you mentioned, Andy, that this might come back to the Gulf Council
40 in August, and so, if there are things that have to be done with
41 the shrimp fleet, is that going to have to be a joint effort with
42 the South Atlantic, potentially, for smalltooth sawfish?

43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm not certain about that. I mean, I know, with
45 giant manta rays, that we do have bycatch that's occurring both
46 off of North Carolina and Louisiana. With smalltooth sawfish,
47 it's largely centered in southwest Florida, Gulf of America waters,
48 but I don't know if that extends in the South Atlantic jurisdiction

1 far enough south.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Were there any further comments? Captain
4 Walker.

5

6 **MR. WALKER:** I just -- This might be a question for Dr. Allen, and
7 I'm not sure, but how many manta encounters have there actually
8 been? I know, last year, we heard there was like one with an
9 observer on the boat, and it was big news and all that, but is it
10 really a thing, or was that just an extreme outlier? I mean, how
11 many giant manta interactions have there been on shrimp boats?

12

13 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. I don't recall the exact
14 numbers. It's a low number, but I'll add that, you know, a low
15 number doesn't necessarily mean no impact, for a species that's
16 endangered and threatened, and so -- But it's in the, you know,
17 single digits to tens. It's not a large number, from the data
18 that we saw.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Mike. Any other questions for
21 Dr. Allen? All right. I'm not seeing any. Thanks, Mike, for
22 that summary. We will go ahead then and move to Agenda Item Number
23 VII, which is a Discussion on Executive Orders Restoring American
24 Seafood Competitiveness. related to that, and Dr. Simmons is going
25 to kind of provide an overview, I guess, of this.

26

27 **DISCUSSION ON EXECUTIVE ORDERS RESTORING AMERICAN SEAFOOD**
28 **COMPETITIVENESS**

29

30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I'm going
31 to provide a short presentation, that staff helped me put together,
32 that summarizes primarily two executive orders that we want to
33 focus on. That's the Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation
34 and Restoring the American Seafood Competitiveness.

35

36 These executive orders were signed by President Trump on January
37 31, 2025 and April 17, 2025, respectively, and then I'll ask SERO
38 staff to help add to my presentation an overview of what we heard
39 at the CCC, as well as some timeline information.

40

41 We've received a letter from our new NOAA AA on when we have to
42 get some movement on our recommendations moving forward, and, also,
43 I would ask our council member leadership who are attending the
44 CCC meeting as well to chime-in on anything that I might've missed,
45 and so I will try to summarize that in a presentation, to get us
46 started.

47

48 Okay, and so an overview of executive orders pertaining to the

1 council and a proposed approach for us to gather input, and so,
2 again, the two primary executive orders that we want to call to
3 your attention, that are going to impact the councils, are
4 Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, which we received the
5 letter on, and it's in your background materials, and then also
6 Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation.

7
8 We have a draft approach for the committee to consider on how we're
9 going to gather input and go about providing these recommendations,
10 based on the deadline that they requested in the letter.

11
12 This is a lot of words, and so sorry about that. For the first
13 one, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, on May 6, 2025,
14 we received a letter from Mr. Soler, our new NOAA AA, requested
15 that we provide -- Each regional council provide an updated
16 prioritized list of recommended actions to reduce burdens on
17 domestic fishing and to increase production within sustainable
18 fisheries, and that deadline was originally by September 1, that
19 was in the letter, and we've been notified that we have an
20 additional thirty days, until the end of the month, if we need it,
21 to provide that information.

22
23 You recall there's a specific Section 4 of the executive order,
24 and I think many people have already seen this, and others have
25 provided some comments on it already, that calls out the regional
26 management councils and gives us a deadline on when we have to do
27 this.

28
29 Just a little bit of information. Other than the orders that we
30 received at the CCC meeting, it was that this EO was described as
31 a top priority of the administration. CCC is Council Coordination
32 Committee. That's all the national regional management councils
33 and Science Center directors and regional administrators, and so
34 sorry if I missed that point, for some newer council members.

35
36 The top component of this executive order is the mandate to
37 suspend, revise, or rescind regulations that unduly burden the
38 commercial fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors.
39 Agencies are tasked with identifying the most overregulated
40 fisheries, particularly those experiencing significant declines in
41 landings or revenue, which we did hear quite a bit about,
42 particularly in the North Pacific, where that is occurring.

43
44 Councils have been asked to update the deregulatory
45 recommendations they previously submitted under a similar process
46 during the last administration, and these updates should include
47 specific actions that stabilize markets, improve access, enhance
48 profitability, and prevent fishery closures. Additionally,

1 councils are expected to provide a work plan and implementation
2 schedule for these actions.

3
4 That was the first one I wanted to touch on. For the second one,
5 the Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation, for each new
6 regulation issued, at least ten prior regulations are to be
7 identified for elimination. This practice is to ensure the cost
8 of plan regulations is responsible, managed, and controlled
9 through a rigorous regulatory budgeting process.

10
11 It calls out, in Fiscal Year 2025, which is in progress, the heads
12 of all agencies are directed to ensure that the total incremental
13 costs of all new regulations, including repealed regulations,
14 being finalized this year shall be significantly less than zero,
15 as determined by the Director of the Office of Management and
16 Budget, unless otherwise required by law or instructions from the
17 director. This executive order also requires that agency actions
18 have a neutral or negative regulatory budget, meaning that the
19 overall cost burden of regulations must decrease annually.

20
21 Just a little bit more information on this from the CCC meeting.
22 As it was explained to us, that a majority of the council actions
23 are considered deregulatory or classified as a routine, you know,
24 fishery management measure, such as, you know, annual
25 specifications, changes in catch limits, bag limits, seasons, and
26 sizes, which are exempt, you know, from that ten-for-one
27 requirement, as we understand it.

28
29 Discretionary regulatory actions are subject to evaluation, to
30 determine whether they are regulatory or deregulatory, and the
31 Department of Commerce will compile a list of such actions each
32 fall to assess overall compliance with the regulatory targets.

33
34 While statutory or court-mandated regulatory actions, such as
35 ending overfishing and rebuilding plans or responding to the
36 Endangered Species Act listings, should still be pursued, they may
37 need to be offset with deregulatory actions elsewhere, and so,
38 obviously, we'll be working closely with the Regional Office and
39 Science Center to figure out and navigate that, as well as the
40 ongoing workload.

41
42 Then the agencies have been instructed to strictly adhere to
43 statutory mandates and avoid creating new regulatory burdens.
44 Given limited agency resources, any discretionary regulatory
45 proposals will require prioritization and careful evaluation, as
46 I just said.

47
48 Staff also thought that there was a couple other executive orders

1 that didn't necessarily call the councils, or fisheries, out
2 directly, but we might want to consider moving forward. One of
3 those, and I think Dr. Porch or Dr. Walter is on, is Restoring the
4 Gold Standard in Science, to ensure that federally-funded research
5 is transparent, rigorous, and impactful and that federal decisions
6 are informed by the most credible, reliable, and impartial
7 scientific evidence available. Reproducibility, rigor and
8 unbiased peer review must be maintained.

9
10 The President has also directed agencies to pursue actions that
11 help lower the cost of living for U.S. citizens, and so, in the
12 fisheries context, efforts to reduce costs of harvesting fish
13 perhaps are a direct way to contribute to this objective.
14 Additionally, agencies are expected to avoid or minimize anti-
15 competitive practices, such as regulatory barriers to entry, in
16 line with the broader economic fairness goals.

17
18 Our proposed approach, because we would need to do this between
19 this council meeting and the August council meeting, would be to
20 convene a half-day webinar meeting with the following advisory
21 panels, and so we were thinking the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-
22 Tilefish IFQ AP, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Red Drum, Reef Fish,
23 Shrimp, and Spiny Lobster.

24
25 It's possible that, you know, we could do two of these at a time.
26 We're not quite sure yet logistics, but we would want to engage
27 with these APs right now, is our plan, and then, also, to get more
28 public input, we would hold an evening webinar together that, and
29 then solicit public comments via the online comment form, as we
30 always do.

31
32 Next steps, once we do that, we would summarize the feedback and
33 organize it for the council to consider during your August 25 to
34 28 meeting this year, and then, at Full Council, we would try to
35 come up with a prioritized list, a final prioritized list, that
36 would be considered, again by that September 30, and we've got a
37 little bit of room, deadline.

38
39 Then the larger challenge I think that we have is, once we identify
40 those, we would need to work with the Regional Office staff and
41 council leadership and establish a workplan, that is also outlined
42 in the EO as follows, that the regional fishery management councils
43 will commit to a workplan and a schedule for implementation, to
44 ensure these actions are prioritized, and so not only identify
45 them, and provide them by the end of September, but also come up
46 with a workplan after that to operationalize those, potentially.
47 I think that's it, but maybe Mr. Strelcheck might want to add to
48 that, or Ms. Levy, and hopefully I didn't mess anything up too

1 bad.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

4

5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so we could maybe just go back through
6 the slides, real quick, and I'll touch upon a couple of points.
7 The seafood competitiveness executive order, and so I appreciate
8 the approach that the council is taking on this one.

9

10 One of the things that I recall being discussed at the CCC, and
11 we've discussed internally within the organization, is the United
12 States was harvesting about nine billion pounds of seafood, up
13 until about 2020, and we've lost about a billion pounds of harvest
14 in the last five years.

15

16 Some of that is not regulatory driven, right, and that's driven by
17 economic conditions, trade, the shrimp industry being an example,
18 potentially climate and weather factors, such as our fisheries up
19 in Alaska, or New England, and so, although the executive order is
20 very specific to, you know, over-regulating fisheries, to the
21 extent that you can provide input, comments, feedback on fisheries
22 maybe that are struggling for reasons that are non-regulatory, or
23 that may have regulatory impacts, but also have other factors that
24 are driving their decline, that I think is beneficial, because it
25 will then be more of like a holistic look across government and
26 ways that we can help that industry, and so I just wanted to
27 mention that.

28

29 We, obviously, stand ready to coordinate and work with the council
30 on deregulatory ideas as well, and so we'll be reaching out to
31 Carrie and sharing some input there.

32

33 With regard to -- If you can move forward to the ten-for-one
34 deregulatory actions, and so, as Carrie noted, and I think on the
35 next slide, the majority of our regulations are not considered
36 significant, right, under a million dollars or more, highly
37 controversial, and several other factors have to be considered.

38

39 One of the questions that we keep getting asked is whether certain
40 actions are regulatory, deregulatory, or routine, and we're kind
41 of navigating that process right now. We're kind of flying the
42 plane as it's being built, and trying to see, obviously, as we
43 move some of the regulations forward, how the administration is
44 going to be interpreting, obviously, those decisions that are being
45 made by the council.

46

47 Similarly, I think, when we get to the workplan at the end of this
48 meeting, we do want to have kind of a robust conversation about

1 prioritization of activities before the council. If you look at
2 Magnuson, there are mandated activities and actions, which Carrie
3 touched upon in her presentation, and there's also a whole list of
4 discretionary actions, right, and so the challenge we're facing
5 right now is the executive orders are very clear in certain
6 aspects, but then can be contradictory in other aspects.

7
8 For example, the seafood competitiveness executive order also
9 talks about data modernization, right? Well, to modernize data,
10 you potentially are going to be placing a greater regulatory burden
11 on industry members, the agency, and there's cost involved with
12 that, but, in turn, that's regulatory, and not necessarily
13 deregulatory, right, and so how do we balance that, as a council,
14 and make decisions about moving some of our data modernization
15 priorities forward, but recognizing that they're discretionary,
16 and potentially regulatory, and will have to be counted against
17 some of the cost burden that's being tracked within the government
18 going forward, and so we don't have all the answers right now.

19
20 I think that's the bottom line I wanted to share with you, but we
21 are working to kind of understand and navigate this, and we have
22 been having some very good conversations with council staff about
23 prioritization of some of the work that's ongoing. Thanks.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Andy. I have a real quick
26 question. There's one-billion pounds of lost harvest, right, and
27 so my question really is how do they determine that? I mean, it's
28 strictly based on historical harvest, I guess, right, but could
29 that number result, for example, from changes in catch limits,
30 right, because of the condition, or the status of the stock, and
31 so those could be a legitimate reduction, I guess, in total
32 harvest. To actually go where I want to go, is the goal to recover
33 one-billion pounds?

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We use that as an example of production that's
36 been lost, right? Now, I don't think it's necessarily a goal to
37 recover the one-billion pounds, but it's a recognition that there
38 has been a loss in productivity, for a variety of reasons, and
39 some of which may be within our control, in terms of the regulatory
40 environment to address, while others might be outside the scope of
41 the regulatory environment.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you. All right, and so I guess,
44 Dr. Simmons, what would be helpful, right, is if we had a
45 discussion at this point to start to throw out some ideas of how
46 we might contribute, and we might build a list, and, you know, I
47 don't think we need any motions or anything at this point, right,
48 and so we're going to continue to gather ideas in this forum, as

1 well as the, you know, meetings with some of the other groups.
2 You'll have probably a more formalized list to bring back to the
3 council in August, and go from there. All right, and I'm getting
4 a nod of a yes, and so Captain Walker.

5
6 **MR. WALKER:** That was going to be my next question. We discussed
7 convening the APs, to give us some recommendations, but I assumed
8 that we were going to maybe go around the room and throw some of
9 our own ideas out, and so is that what we're doing?

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that
14 that would be great, if folks are ready to do that, and it might
15 be helpful if perhaps, Bernie, if you could just jot down the list,
16 and I'll also take some notes, and we could put that in the report
17 for Full Council, and look at that again and see if that's what we
18 would want to consider moving forward for now.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so we're going to have a fair
21 amount of time for an open forum, it looks like. Mr. Anson.

22
23 **MR. ANSON:** I don't have any topics right at the moment that I
24 would offer. I'm just curious, Andy, and the, I guess, definition,
25 or further fleshing out, the deregulatory and regulatory types of
26 actions, and will you be able to share that, as soon as you develop
27 those internally within the agency, so that either they can be
28 available for the AP meetings or for us for at least the August
29 meeting?

30
31 I struggled too when I read this, read the presentation, as to,
32 you know, what is regulatory and what is non-regulatory, I guess,
33 in the aspect of, you know, the core principles of managing ACLs
34 and such, and so I'm just curious if you could share that as soon
35 as possible with the folks in the process.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

38
39 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, yes, and there's definitions, as Mara is
40 pointing out, and then there's interpretation of those
41 definitions, and so I think the first key aspect is there is a
42 guidance memo from the Office of Management and Budget, and, as
43 part of the many questions and answers that's in that guidance
44 memo, it refers to routine fish and wildlife actions.

45
46 It actually calls out annual catch limits, or annual
47 specifications, as a routine action. The question has become what
48 else are routine fish and wildlife actions? Is a bag limit change,

1 where there's an existing bag limit, and is there an allocation
2 change, and is that routine? You know, what is the scope of that,
3 and so that's why I was implying that we're kind of navigating
4 that, to kind of figure out what constitutes truly a routine
5 action, versus, for example, like if we were building a new IFQ
6 program, and that would not necessarily be routine.

7
8 It's not something we do on a regular basis, right, and then, from
9 the deregulatory and regulatory aspect, right, deregulatory -- Are
10 we alleviating restrictions? Are we reducing costs, or burden, to
11 the industry members, versus a regulatory action, which would be
12 in turn doing the opposite of that, but deemed non-routine, in
13 terms of the work that we're doing, right, and so you can see how
14 it gets a little bit complicated and why I think it's going to be
15 very much scenario-based, as we push forward rule makings and kind
16 of understand where that approval process lands with the deeming
17 each of these in the different categories.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.

20
21 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right. I'll bite here. I've got some ideas
22 that I'll throw out there that maybe can spurn some discussion,
23 and so I'll start out simple, and so I think that there's a
24 possibility that we could remove some species from some of our
25 fishery management units.

26
27 I'm thinking along the lines of cubera snapper, a very limited
28 quota, and we don't really do anything with that, in terms of an
29 assessment or data analysis, aside from just looking at the
30 landings. Similarly, I would say, along the lines for the jacks
31 complex, probably other than greater amberjack. It's another group
32 of fishes that we don't do anything with.

33
34 The mid-water snapper complex, I'm a little bit on the fence about
35 that one, in particular because of queen snapper. I've heard some
36 concerns about that one, but the other three species, the blackfin,
37 wenchman, and silk -- I mean, we had previously talked about
38 kicking out wenchman anyways, but then we had some challenges
39 associated with putting it as an ecosystem component species, but
40 I think, ultimately, since the fisherman left the industry, we
41 didn't really do anything with that, and so some ideas about that,
42 for just kind of reducing some of the things that we're working
43 on.

44
45 Some other ideas that I've had, I mean, you've heard me harp on
46 multiyear ACLs and accountability measures, and we had some
47 challenges associated with the multiyear ACL. Similarly, I would
48 put carryover options as something that we could consider there

1 for unharvested quota.

2

3 We hear a lot about shark depredation, but we're not allowed to
4 land those fishes, in particular, and so that could be something
5 that we could look into to increase the amount of harvest, and
6 then I'll just kind of get on my high horse about the stock
7 assessment process in general.

8

9 I think, you know, if -- I know we're actively in the process of
10 trying to improve that, to get more regular, less time-intensive,
11 quite frankly, stock assessments, but being able to utilize interim
12 assessments more frequently, contract out, you know, some of these
13 stock assessments, so they can be done in a more timely manner,
14 and therefore we can apply quota changes, changes that we're seeing
15 in the fishery, in a more rapid timeframe, rather than utilizing
16 data that's five years old before we're being able to actually act
17 on it, and so just some things on those lines that I am thinking
18 about that could fall in line with some of the things that is in
19 this executive order.

20

21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Way to go C.J. Captain Walker.

22

23 **MR. WALKER:** I think this is great. I think we should make a --
24 Have everybody chip in on this list, and we can go through it, and
25 so, following Dr. Sweetman's lead, I'll throw some in there that
26 I think meet the EO request.

27

28 The first one, I mean, if we're being serious about overburdened
29 commercial fishermen, I think there should be a discussion about
30 the ban of the sale of shark fins harvested by domestic American
31 fishermen from legally-harvested sharks and sustainably-documented
32 species.

33

34 Currently a shark fisherman, an American commercial shark
35 fisherman can land a shark, cut off the most valuable part and
36 throw it away, and sell the body for a dollar, and so, if we're
37 trying to restore competitiveness in commercial fishing, dumping
38 the most valuable part doesn't make any sense to me, and so I think
39 it would be reasonable to have a discussion about that, at least.
40 I know it's a controversial topic.

41

42 Other things I would have on my list, we could take a look at some
43 of the commercial requirements for turtle gear. A requirement to
44 have a car tire on your boat is over the top, and I think this is
45 a great venue here to recognize that we have maybe gone over the
46 top on regulating these commercial guys.

47

48 You know, my particular case, I have a thirty-one-foot center

1 console, and I'm supposed to carry a car tire to set a turtle on.
2 I've never caught a turtle in my life, and there's no room on my
3 boat for a car tire, and, if I put one on there, it makes tire
4 marks on my boat, and so this is over the top, I think, and so I
5 think this meets what the EO is after here.

6
7 The other parts of the turtle gear could maybe be reviewed, like
8 a certain brand of dog bone to put in the turtle's mouth while you
9 de-hook it is silly to me, and, you know, these are burdens on
10 commercial fishermen, and that's what we're asked about.

11
12 Other things that might restore commercial fishing
13 competitiveness, some of the reporting requirements, or the
14 monitoring requirements, are a bit over the top, in my view.
15 Reporting when not fishing is a bit of a burden. You can get in
16 big trouble for moving your boat without telling somebody what
17 you're doing with it. That could be looked at.

18
19 While I'm on my list, I'm going to throw two more in here. The
20 crew size limit on a dual-permitted commercial boat limits the
21 size of a commercial crew that a boat can take out, whereas other
22 commercial boats are not required to have that. I think that's -
23 - In my case, that's been a burden many times. I think that could
24 be removed.

25
26 Also, I'm not a fan personally of did-not-fish reporting, although
27 I recognize that some people -- It's just we have to have that,
28 but to get in trouble for not fishing seems like a bit of a burden
29 as well, and so I'll leave it there, but I hope that everybody
30 here can contribute to this list, because I think this is a great
31 opportunity to clean things up in a way that the executive order
32 seems to be asking us to do.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Ed, for adding to that
35 list. We'll go to Andy, and then back to C.J.

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I just want to demonstrate the efficiency
38 of the government and advise Captain Walker that tires are actually
39 not required for sea turtles.

40
41 **MR. WALKER:** So I'll tell you what I did in that case, just to
42 respond to that. A car tire or a similar cushioned turtle resting
43 device is the statute, and so what I did is I took my life ring,
44 and I put a pad -- I stuck a pad on it, and I wrote the statute on
45 top of it, and so, when they questioned me for not having a car
46 tire, the statute is in their hand, so they can read it. However,
47 it is a tire or a similar device.

48

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I will acknowledge that point well taken, and so
2 we will talk about it amongst our sea turtle team.

3
4 **MR. WALKER:** This is just for discussion. This isn't saying we
5 should do any of this, but I would love to hear other people
6 discuss.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J.

9
10 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I'm going to throw on another species for potential
11 consideration for removal from our kind of management system here,
12 and I'm going to throw a spiny lobster out there. That is a
13 fishery that is clearly, for the most part, in Florida. A vast
14 majority of where the fishery comes from is not from the United
15 States at all.

16
17 Anyways, I think the main reason why we even have this is because
18 of the import size limit, nationwide import size limit, that's
19 managed federally, but, as you can tell at the council, we don't
20 -- Do we ever talk about spiny lobster, and so I'll just throw
21 that out there.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

24
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I appreciate C.J.'s comments, and I guess, more
26 broadly, from what you're suggesting about species being removed,
27 either from the management plan or fishery management units, I
28 think we probably want to have a more global look at all of our
29 species, right, and we had a good conversation, at the CCC meeting
30 and within the NMFS leadership team, about aligning the resources
31 now that the agency is going to have for science research and
32 monitoring with the species that are managed by the council, and
33 so I like the direction you're going, and I think we just want to
34 make sure it's more holistic even than the species you're
35 mentioning.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mara.

38
39 **MS. LEVY:** Thanks, and I'm not really commenting on any of these
40 things. You can certainly discuss all of them. I think it's
41 helpful to have this list. I will just note that the shark fin
42 ban is like statutory, right, and so just acknowledging --
43 Obviously, you can still talk about it, but, if there are things
44 on the list that are statutory rather than regulatory, just knowing
45 that in advance is helpful. Thanks.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mara. Kesley.

1 **DR. BANKS:** I just want to put on the record here, because it was
2 discussed at the CCC, and the question came up that these EOs are
3 very commercial-specific, and so how does this affect the
4 recreational sector, and Sam said, throughout the EO, unless the
5 word "commercial" is directly in front of the word "fishery", then,
6 any other time in the EO when it says "fishery", that is to include
7 recreational. There is a for-hire sector that is a part of the
8 economics of that, and so I just want to put that on the record
9 for everybody here, as you think about deregulatory and regulatory
10 actions.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you for that comment. That's great.
13 Captain Walker.

14
15 **MR. WALKER:** Just one more thing about the shark fin ban. If you
16 want to talk about how you lost millions and millions of pounds in
17 American fisheries, the shark fin ban is, by my read, an end-
18 around way to ban shark fishing altogether, and it has succeeded
19 in doing that, and so there is essentially no -- In the Gulf,
20 there's virtually no commercial shark fishing, or no profitable,
21 and there's untold millions of pounds that are not caught because
22 of that now, and so just one more thing to that.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** General Spraggins.

25
26 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** I would just like to keep it in the loop
27 here, I guess, is basically talking about moving the quota between
28 states, from snapper, and, you know, to be able to keep that on
29 the radar, and I think that's something that, using the Gulf-wide
30 quota, and unless we exceed the Gulf-wide quota, that we could be
31 able to move that between states, and I think that's happening in
32 other places.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, General. Any other -- Are you
35 adding to specificity there on the General's comments, and is that
36 specific to red snapper? All right. I remember, a while back, we
37 had a fair amount of discussion about estimating weights before
38 you come in to offload your fish, and there was a fair amount of
39 contentious discussion around that.

40
41 I guess I would maybe get some comment, during public comment time,
42 about whether that's something that we could revisit, but maybe I
43 could look at John Sanchez, or Ed or somebody, and -- Estimating
44 weights when you're coming in. Mr. Chairman.

45
46 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. I think I recall that
47 conversation was maybe with Mr. Schieble, and I don't remember the
48 details on it, but I remember Chris speaking about that.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and if we can just add it to the list,
3 right, and we'll do a little homework and come back to that.
4 Commercial estimating weights. All right. Any more additions to
5 the list, or do you guys want to just talk about any of those
6 things on the list? Captain Frady.

7
8 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Good morning, everyone. Following along with
9 this right here, I do agree with C.J. and Ed. I do like the
10 direction this is going, especially for the charter-for-hire
11 requirement to keep the turtle gear onboard, and definitely getting
12 rid of that one, but we do have a problem with the sharks and their
13 scavenging and their predation.

14
15 We need to maintain -- I guess we need to really look at any kind
16 of alternative measures between marine mammals, having some kind
17 of a deterrent to try to encourage marine mammals not to have
18 interactions with us.

19
20 I don't know what we can do about the sharks, but there is a
21 problem with sharks out there. We're getting hit a lot, and it
22 also has, what I'm seeing as a direct correlation between the
23 biomass on the reefs, as to whether or not the sharks are there or
24 not, and then also the size of the reef, and so I agree with
25 everything we're doing right here. I just want to look at any
26 kind of deterrence we could use to discourage marine mammals from
27 interacting with us. Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Captain Frady. The chairman just
30 made me realize and think about the fact that there's a lot of
31 discussion here on sharks, right, but the Gulf Council doesn't
32 manage sharks, right, and so I don't know how to get around that,
33 except perhaps to have a more meaningful, or engaged, dialogue
34 with the folks at HMS. Ed.

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and I thought of that as well, and I certainly
37 recognize that, but, being that we've been asked by the President's
38 office, I guess, to send recommendations on how we could -- Our
39 corner of the country here, how we could increase the
40 competitiveness of commercial fishermen, I thought maybe that the
41 Gulf Council could say -- You know, if we send a list to say that,
42 you know, this is something that could help, and we don't manage
43 it or something, but we're here in the Gulf, and we have this
44 issue, and we have fishermen that are out of work, that would like
45 to work, if they were able to make money in this fishery.

46
47 We, obviously, can't dictate the rules, but I think it would be
48 good if the Gulf Council were to maybe write a letter, or at least

1 recommend HMS, or somebody, revisit the shark fin ban, based on
2 our fishermen in our region.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Ed. It looks like, Billy,
5 you've got your hand up.

6
7 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. The one
8 thing, and this relative to the recreational sector is -- I wish
9 I was there to see everybody's eyes roll back, but regional
10 management across most species, and, if we could start moving in
11 that direction, that would take some of the burden off the federal
12 agencies and put it on in the states, where they already have
13 people in place to handle it, and, I mean, we've got three states
14 that are, or I guess four, that are kind of getting prepared for
15 it, and we've got all the tools in the shed, and so that's what I
16 would like to see, for at least -- I think it would save some
17 money. Thank you.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Billy. Mr. Sanchez.

20
21 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I don't know that this really goes to what we're
22 talking about, in terms of executive order and the things we're
23 trying to identify, but, while we keep hearing about, you know,
24 regional management, and state management, if we're going to have
25 state management, I'm going to say we also need to start to look
26 at sector separation for the charter-for-hire, and, as we go
27 forward, we need to include them in this process, and separate out
28 the things that they deem important, so that we do this fairly.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, John. I'm just waiting for people
31 to roll through. I mean, some of these things are, obviously,
32 going to require a fair amount of discussion, right, and, you know,
33 I'll just hit a couple of examples.

34
35 I mean, I really like where C.J. was going with regard to, you
36 know, considering multiyear ACLs and, you know, how we deal with
37 accountability measures. I think, when I look at the landscape
38 moving forward, I don't see there's a lot of appetite, or
39 resources, for, you know, increasing data collection, right, and
40 so I don't think -- I think we have to look at how to streamline
41 some of the ways that we manage our fishery, right, and I think
42 we're going to have to probably look pretty carefully at, you know,
43 kind of the MSE approach.

44
45 I think we're going to have to use a lot more indices, and I think
46 we need some flexibility, but what I don't know is, if we take an
47 approach like that, Andy -- I mean, if you don't kind of respond
48 every year to an ACL, for example, or an overage, is that

1 considered deregulatory, or is that just part of routine
2 management?

3
4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I guess I would just say more generally,
5 Tom, regardless of, you know, your question, I think it's something
6 we're going to have to look at just out of necessity, right, and
7 so I agree with you, and, you know, if Clay or John were here,
8 they probably say the same thing, that we are going to have to
9 align that science and research capacity better with our managed
10 resources.

11
12 We know we haven't been able to keep up with our current stock
13 assessment process, the number of species we're managing. Are
14 there ways that we can streamline, and make the process more
15 efficient, but, in doing so, more simplistic as well, right, and
16 I like -- You know, to the extent we have good indices of abundance
17 to manage fisheries, that's certainly an opportunity I see for
18 potentially having more responsive management than what we're
19 dealing with right now.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks. Mara.

22
23 **MS. LEVY:** Well, and just to your question about flexibility, I
24 mean, I think we can always try to look at flexibility, but,
25 ultimately, we have to articulate how we're preventing
26 overfishing, right, and so, if what we're planning to do complies
27 with the statutory mandate to have annual catch limits and
28 accountability measures to prevent overfishing, we can articulate
29 how we're doing that. I mean, I think we all want flexibility,
30 and so it's just a matter of developing that and then building
31 that record.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I agree. Okay. Any other thoughts?
34 Anybody online? All right. We can certainly -- I mean, we're
35 going to get some feedback, I would imagine, during the public
36 comment period, right, and we can come back at Full Council and
37 give people a little bit of time to think about this, and so we're
38 pretty close to a break. Do you want to go ahead and take a break,
39 Mr. Chairman?

40
41 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Dr. Frazer. We'll take a break,
42 and let's come back at 10:20.

43
44 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

45
46 **MR. DUGAS:** Before we get started, I would like to recognize that
47 Ms. Susan Boggs is here. Thank you for coming, Ms. Susan, and
48 also remind council folks, council members and staff, that we do

1 have a working lunch scheduled today. Dr. Frazer.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try
4 to move us along with Reef Fish Amendment 58A, which is Agenda
5 Item Number VIII. I think Dr. Freeman, if you want to lead us
6 through the action guide there.

7
8 **DRAFT OPTIONS: AMENDMENT 58A: SHALLOW-WATER GROUPEL COMPLEX**
9 **MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

10
11 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so, for this item, in light of
12 the updated yield stream projections on scamp and yellowmouth
13 grouper, the SSC recommended, at its May 8, 2025 meeting, the
14 council should direct staff to update Reef Fish Amendment 58A
15 accordingly. Staff will walk through the most recent version of
16 the document with the committee, as a reminder of the range of
17 actions and alternatives previously considered in the document.

18
19 The committee should review the information presented, ask
20 questions, and provide direction to staff, as appropriate. The
21 committee should specifically provide direction to staff regarding
22 the timeline for completion and implementation of the amendment.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I've got a quick question. Do you want to run
25 through the SSC summary first? Okay. Mike.

26
27 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you. Thank you, Tom. Okay, and so we're going
28 to summarize this shallow water grouper complex. Thank you for
29 the -- This is the slide we need to be on. Just an update on the
30 timeline of how this has gone so far.

31
32 We first -- The SSC first saw this assessment, and reviewed the
33 assessment, in 2023. We found, at that time, that it was a very
34 solid assessment. We had a number of comments, but overall thought
35 -- It was the first assessment of scamp and shallow-water grouper
36 overall, and so it was a really nicely done assessment, that we
37 found to be credible and consistent with BSIA. Then it came back
38 to us. Well, let's go to the next slide.

39
40 This was the request from the council, with the motion for us to
41 provide -- That SSC provide a comparison MSY proxy at 30 percent
42 and 40 percent SPR associated with catch level projections for
43 scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and the comparison should highlight
44 the consequences for management using either MSY proxy. We did
45 that, at our last meeting, and I'll show some examples of the yield
46 streams, and that kind of thing, and then our motion.

47
48 Basically, what was done with this assessment is just updated the

1 landings for 2021, 2022 and 2023, and then rerun the projections
2 with those updated landings, with no other parameters in the model
3 changing, and so these are examples of showing the landings for
4 both the recreational and the commercial sectors, charter private
5 as well.

6
7 Then I'm going to show two slides of just the ABC, and I'm just
8 using those as examples, but the ABC projections that came out of
9 that, and the ABC -- This is for the 30 percent SPR, the F at 30
10 percent SPR, and you can see there that the ratio of F, current
11 year F, divided by F 30 percent SPR, exceeded one in a few of those
12 years at 30 percent SPR, and so those are highlighted in red, and
13 so that's how it came out with the 30 percent SPR.

14
15 I'll go to the next slide. This is at the 40 percent SPR, and you
16 can see, as you would expect more, more of the values are red here,
17 both for the F over F SPR 40 and for the spawning stock biomass
18 divided by MSST, minimum stock size threshold, and so it indicated
19 an overfishing status in those projections at 40 percent SPR, and
20 these are shown with the ABC of being 0.75 times F 40 percent SPR,
21 which is consistent with what we've done in most of the assessments
22 recently.

23
24 Okay, and so we had a good discussion about this. There wasn't a
25 lot of detail, because we had already discussed this assessment
26 before, but it was just with these updated projections, and then
27 we came with two motions, per the council request, and so that's
28 the next slide.

29
30 The first motion I'll read is the SSC accepts the updated
31 projections for SEDAR 68 for Gulf of America scamp and yellowmouth
32 Grouper, setting an OFL at 0.233 million pounds gutted weight,
33 equal to the yield at 40 percent SPR, and the ABC is 0.183 million
34 pounds gutted weight as the yield at 75 percent of 40 percent SPR
35 for 2027 to 2031. That motion carried without opposition.

36
37 Then the second one was, per the request from the council, the SSC
38 recognizes that the scamp and yellowmouth grouper OFL at F 30
39 percent SPR would be 0.311 million pounds gutted weight, and the
40 ABC would be 0.25 million pounds gutted weight at 75 percent F 30
41 percent SPR for the years 2027 to 2031, but we do not recommend F
42 30 percent SPR values for scamp and yellowmouth grouper, based on
43 life history and attributes of the species, which is consistent
44 with the decisions that the SSC has recommended so far for
45 hermaphroditic grouper over the last couple of years, and so that
46 motion also carried without any opposition. That's our summary.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Allen. Are there any

1 questions for Dr. Allen? C.J.

2

3 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you for the presentation, Dr. Allen, and I
4 was the motion maker relative to the 30 versus 40 percent. I'm
5 fine, and like I understand that scamp likely falls within the 40
6 percent SPR range, but my question -- As I was listening to that
7 discussion, and some of the subsequent data that the Science Center
8 provided, can you talk a little bit about why it was chosen to use
9 the mean average for recruitment in there, because that seemed to
10 be pretty highly influential for catch streams later on.

11

12 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, it is, C.J., and thanks for bringing that up, and
13 so the issue with the assessment is that there was a -- I believe
14 it was ten years, and it was not just a few years. It was, I
15 think, at least nine or ten years of low recruitment in the
16 assessment, and so what was presented to us, and we had some
17 discussion about whether to use the stock-recruit curve average
18 recruitment for long-term projections or use those lower, the
19 average of the lower, recruitment.

20

21 We had a good discussion about that. I think that, if it had been
22 just a few years of lower recruitment, that might have carried the
23 day to not use those low recruitment years, but the fact that
24 recruitment had been down for ten years at the end of the
25 assessment -- That's what carried the day for us to use the lower
26 recruitment average, but that was a good discussion.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Mike. Captain Walker.

29

30 **MR. WALKER:** I'm not sure it's exactly related to this part of it,
31 but how much influence did MRIP catch estimates affect the
32 recommended catch on this? Was it a major factor, or not a big
33 driver of the outcome?

34

35 **DR. ALLEN:** The units on this were MRIP-FES estimates, and so I
36 don't -- At the last meeting, and even our original one, I don't
37 remember a lot of discussion about that. Ryan, do you have
38 anything to add?

39

40 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you. Yes, and I would add that the use of the
41 MRIP-FES data units for the private recreational fleet is going to
42 increase the number that you see, but, again, it needs to be
43 thought of relevant to the increase in the fishing effort that's
44 projected to carry with using MRIP-FES for quota monitoring
45 purposes also, and so if we were -- If scamp was monitored by SRFs,
46 which it's not, but let's say that it was, and that number was
47 used for this, then the numbers that you guys would be looking at
48 would be even smaller, but, again, it would be scaled based on the

1 amount of effort that SRFS would measure for a species.

2
3 It gets back into that currency parity that we had talked about,
4 you know, with using dollars, or yen, or pesos, or what have you,
5 and how much of it is going to change based on which data unit you
6 use.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Ryan. Okay. Any other questions with
9 regard to the SSC summary? All right. I'm not seeing any. Thanks,
10 Mike. Dr. Freeman, if we probably want to go to the document and
11 start working through the action items, and, again, I just want to
12 remind folks that, based on the discussion that we had earlier
13 this morning, we need to be thinking about the timeline associated
14 with the development of this document and what the consequences
15 might be with regard to seasons on black grouper, for example, and
16 so, all right, Matt. It's all yours.

17
18 **DR. FREEMAN:** Great, and so this has not been updated since the
19 last time the committee reviewed it, and so I'm going to review
20 the actions and the alternatives that the committee saw last time,
21 and, for some of the actions, discuss potential updates to the
22 alternatives that the IPT will consider following this council
23 meeting leading into development of the document for the August
24 meeting.

25
26 Action 1 is one of the ones that will remain, I think, fairly
27 constant. Our no action is to maintain the current composition of
28 the other shallow-water grouper complex, whereas Alternative 2, if
29 you recall, would be to dissolve the other shallow-water grouper
30 complex and create two new complexes, one that we're referring to
31 as a scamp complex, which will contain scamp and yellowmouth
32 grouper, and then one referred to as a black grouper complex
33 containing black grouper and yellowfin grouper complex.

34
35 One reminder here is, since it has been a few meetings since the
36 committee saw this document, with Alternative 2, in terms of
37 creating the new complexes, as a result of that, the flexibility
38 measures between other shallow-water grouper and deepwater grouper
39 would cease, and no longer be applicable, with Alternative 2, and
40 so, Bernie, if we can move forward to Action 2.

41
42 All right, and so Action 2, with Alternative 1, if we have
43 established these two new complexes, our no action would be not to
44 establish MSY, MFMT, MSST, or OY for either complex. Alternative
45 2 would be to establish those as defined for the other shallow-
46 water grouper complex and for black grouper, as written in
47 Amendment 48.

1 Alternative 3 would establish a new MSY, MFMT, MSST, and OY for
2 those complexes, and we have a table right there. The main thing
3 I want to highlight here, and I think visually it probably makes
4 it a little bit clearer, the difference between Alternative 2 and
5 Alternative 3 is that, under Alternative 3 with the scamp complex,
6 the MSY would be based off of the F 40 percent SPR, whereas
7 Alternative 2 would use the F 30 percent SPR for both of those
8 complexes, and, if you recall from just a few moments ago, that
9 was the SSC recommendation from its May meeting, to use the F 40
10 percent SPR, and I believe there's a question, and so I'll pause.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.

13
14 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Freeman, and so I guess I'm a little
15 confused, and so, if we've got an SSC recommendation for 40
16 percent, and so Alternative 2 uses 30 percent, is that even a
17 viable option then?

18
19 **DR. FREEMAN:** So that's a good question. As a reminder, this is
20 -- We didn't make updates to this, and so that is something that
21 the IPT will need to discuss, unless anybody from perhaps SERO
22 wants to chime-in at this point, whether or not it would be viable.
23 If not, it would be something we'll discuss during the IPT.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So anybody from SERO want to weigh-in?

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We're talking amongst ourselves. In terms of the
28 viability, obviously, we have the SSC that has weighed-in on best
29 scientific information available and recommended the 40 percent,
30 and so, unless there was information to the contrary that would
31 make this viable, I would probably agree that we want to have the
32 IPT look at removing it, going forward.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so just from a procedural, I guess,
35 view, how regularly will the IPT meet, and will you have that --
36 I mean, you're going to bring this back in the August meeting,
37 right, and is that something that will be resolved before then?

38
39 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir, and so we'll likely schedule an IPT shortly
40 after this council meeting, and the intent is to bring an updated
41 draft document to the council in August.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Matt. Dr. Froeschke.

44
45 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So I guess, just to clarify, I mean, my take on
46 this would be that the committee's wish is to remove that
47 alternative from the document, that that 30 percent for scamp is
48 not a viable alternative.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So I don't know if we've discussed that as a
3 committee yet, and so what I interpreted that as is, I mean, just
4 on procedural grounds, right, and is it viable or not, and we
5 haven't resolved that. If it's not, it automatically goes. You
6 know, that would be the recommendation.

7
8 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and I guess are you wanting the IPT to
9 determine if it's viable, or it seems like this group is the one
10 to do that. That's -- I don't want to take it out if you're
11 considering it, or if there's a path forward, but --

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I mean, again, in my opinion, John, there's two
14 things here. I mean, again, from the agency's perspective, right,
15 and, you know, a legal perspective, if it's not viable, then we
16 shouldn't even entertain it, but I don't want to prematurely take
17 it out of the document, I don't think. Mr. Chairman.

18
19 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. I'm thinking of the last shrimp
20 amendment we passed, and we heard arguments all the way to the
21 finish line that there was a non-viable option in there, and so I
22 don't know the proper procedure, Andy, but, in my opinion, I don't
23 think it's -- I don't think it has to be removed now, or today,
24 and I would -- I think I would prefer for the council members to
25 maybe make a decision on that as well.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure, and so, I mean, we certainly don't have to
28 remove it today, right? We can have some discussion about, you
29 know, the two alternatives, and I think I'm happy to entertain
30 that. Andy.

31
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, I see a couple of paths here.
33 So, like Tom, right, I think it would be good to get the legal
34 advice and bring this back to us. You know, in comparing it to
35 shrimp, right, the conversation around the table is whether or not
36 the shrimp amendment alternative was consistent with National
37 Standard 7, right?

38
39 In this instance, is Alternative 2 consistent with the best
40 scientific information available, and, if not, then that,
41 obviously, doesn't make it necessarily viable. You guys were
42 making the case, at least within shrimp, that maybe this isn't a
43 duplication, even though there was additional costs that would be
44 involved, right, and so, if we include it, or maintain it, I think
45 the discussion is going to have to then center around the SSC
46 advice, and BSIA, and, ultimately, a preferred alternative
47 decision would be anchored in that discussion.

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So, again, I think the bulk of the discussion
2 with regard to this particular alternative is to -- Around this
3 table is, you know, to consider, again, what are the implications,
4 you know, of not accepting, for example, the SSC's recommendation,
5 and what I haven't heard is a compelling argument yet, right, from
6 anybody that would suggest that we deviate from that Alternative
7 3. Okay, and I don't think, Dr. Freeman, there's much of an
8 appetite for that, and so we'll bring this probably back in August,
9 right, and we'll have the IPT weigh-in on that, and then we'll go
10 from there, and so if you want to move to the next action item.

11
12 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so, Bernie, if we could move forward
13 to Action 3, and so Action 3 will establish the stock complex OFL
14 and ABC for both the scamp complex and the black grouper complex,
15 and so Alternative 1, our no action, would not establish catch
16 limits for either complex.

17
18 Alternative 2, we have two tables here, one for the scamp complex
19 and one for the black grouper complex. Again, the IPT needs to
20 meet, and this is, again, an older version of the document that
21 needs to be updated. For the scamp complex, the values here are
22 older, the F 40 percent SPR, off an operational assessment, and I
23 believe Dr. Simmons want to add in.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Carrie.

26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I guess
28 -- I think it would be good for us to have a motion from the
29 committee that directs staff to move forward with the SSC's
30 recommendations, so that we could input those here in the document.
31 I don't know that we've really formally done that yet. We got the
32 report, and they updated the landings, and they reran the
33 projections, but I don't know that we have, you know, clear
34 direction that staff is to move forward with those new numbers.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I'm happy to do that, and so, I mean,
37 does anybody on the committee want to like make that motion, in
38 particular? If not, I'm happy to do it.

39
40 **Okay, and so I agree with Dr. Simmons' advice here, right, and so**
41 **the motion would be for the council to accept the SSC's**
42 **recommendations, right, as they relate to catch limits. Dr.**
43 **Froeschke.**

44
45 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, so you mean the SPR 40, the yields at SPR -
46 - So a couple of things, just for information. When those were
47 done, there were two assumptions that were made, one that there
48 was the 54 percent reduction in the framework action, and, two,

1 because of the SPR 40, those are based on F rebuild, because it
2 was below the MSST.

3
4 However, that -- Because this is a new document, and we would have
5 new complexes, that MSST wouldn't actually -- It doesn't actually
6 -- There's not SDC for this right now, because it would be a new
7 complex, and so it presumes that we would have a new MSST, and the
8 SDC would be overfished, and these would be the corresponding catch
9 limits. If I confused you, I apologize.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Well, keep apologizing.

12
13 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and this is based on F rebuild, and F rebuild
14 implies that you are below the minimum stock size threshold, as
15 defined in the status determination criteria, and so, to unwind
16 that, we don't have an F status determination criteria, and so we
17 don't have an MSST, and so we couldn't technically be overfished,
18 which is what this is based on, but presumably you would have to
19 define SDC and the MSST in the document, which would immediately
20 place it in overfished, if you had not adopted the catch limits
21 based on that.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure, but a precursor to all of that, right, is
24 you have to move forward with the recommendations of the SSC to
25 adopt that 40 percent SPR to work through all of the various math.

26
27 **DR. FROESCHKE:** True, and I just wanted to make sure everyone knew
28 what was all baked into that, because there are many things that
29 were difficult to understand.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I appreciate that, John, and so, again,
32 the motion -- I guess I want to make sure that it's appropriate,
33 right, but it's to recommend that the council accept the SSC's
34 recommendation as it relates to -- Let me go back to the MSY proxy,
35 right?

36
37 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, it's the OFL and ABC based on the SPR 40
38 recommendations.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and that's fine, and so accept the SSC's
41 recommendation as it relates to the MSY, or as it relates to catch
42 limits based on the MSY proxy at F 40 percent SPR. Matt.

43
44 **DR. FREEMAN:** I might suggest specifying that it's for scamp and
45 yellowmouth grouper.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Details, details, details. All right. **Bernie,**
48 **let's go ahead and say to recommend that the council accept the**

1 **SSC's recommendation as it relates to catch limits based on the**
2 **MSY proxy of F SPR 40 percent for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.**
3 John, are we in good stead there? All right. Is there a second
4 to that motion?

5
6 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I'll second for discussion.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Seconded by Dr. Sweetman. All right.
9 I'll open the floor for discussion. Mr. Sanchez.

10
11 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I just had a question. If I'm understanding this
12 correctly, it looks like, from 2025 to 2029, the scamp MSST is
13 below one. That suggests overfished. Is there any talk of
14 rebuilding this, some rebuilding plan or something?

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Froeschke.

17
18 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I guess I'll try, and then I'm going to ask
19 Ms. Levy to weigh-in, but, since we don't technically have status
20 determination criteria now, it can't be overfished, but, as soon
21 as we would develop those in an amendment, it would immediately
22 become overfished, if we don't take action to do it. I'll stop
23 there, but there might be more.

24
25 **MS. LEVY:** Right, and so you would adopt those, but, at the same
26 time, if we're using the recommended yield streams, you're kind of
27 like baking in the rebuilding, and so, once this plan amendment
28 gets approved and implemented, you might get a letter from the
29 Fisheries Service saying it's overfished, but we see that you've
30 already adopted catch levels, right, and so, if we bake in the
31 catch levels that will rebuild it, which it looks like is
32 happening, then you would have probably met your obligation, but,
33 I mean, the Fisheries Service would have to evaluate it once it
34 gets approved.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Mara. Mr. Sanchez.

37
38 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I'm 100 percent more confused now. It's kind of
39 like you got to vote on it so you can read it. I don't -- You
40 know, I'm lost.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Is there any further discussion of
43 the motion? Kevin. No? Okay. You're happy? Okay. I'm happy
44 for you. All right. **Is there any opposition to the motion?**
45 **Seeing none, the motion carries.**

46
47 I don't think we're done with this action though, right? I mean,
48 there's a lot of things that are baked in here, and so I know,

1 after talking with some folks around the table, I mean, there's
2 this kind of how we split this, and there's some seasonal
3 considerations for the two subcomplexes and things like that, and
4 so maybe C.J., I'll just give you the mic for a second.

5
6 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I do think that we can address that seasonal
7 component in Action 7. Is that about right, and so I think maybe,
8 as we move through this document, and the actions in here, we can
9 probably get to that seasonal component there.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. That's fine. All right. In that case
12 then, we'll just go ahead, and and we'll go ahead and move to
13 Action Item 3 then, Matt.

14
15 **DR. FREEMAN:** So now we're on to Action 4, which would establish
16 the ACLs and sector allocation for the proposed scamp complex and
17 black grouper complex. There are a total of four alternatives.
18 The first, given that these are new complexes, would not establish
19 sector allocations for either of them.

20
21 Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 highlight, in black, what the differences
22 are, and they pertain primarily to the scamp complex, and so,
23 again, I know these have been brought before the committee before.
24 I think what may be easiest, at this point, sort of is a summary
25 overview, and then, if needed, we can go back to the language of
26 the alternatives. Bernie, if you could go to the next page, to
27 Table 2.4.2.

28
29 That shows, across Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, the resulting
30 allocations, and so Alternative two, in this case, applies what is
31 in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, and so, basically, it's what
32 exists for the other shallow-water grouper complex currently, and
33 then applies it to the two proposed complexes.

34
35 Alternatives 3 and 4, as I mentioned, in that last row for the
36 scamp complex, would result in different allocations. In this
37 case, for both Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, increasing the
38 recreational sectors percentage, and, again, I'll just mention,
39 briefly, those are based off of historic landings for Alternative
40 3. It's based off of 2012 through 2023, excluding 2020, whereas
41 Alternative 4 uses the most recent three years of landings, which
42 were 2021 through 2023 when this document was first prepared, and
43 so I'll pause, if there's any questions. Otherwise we'll proceed
44 to Action 5. I see a question.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Matt. Dr. Sweetman.

47
48 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Not necessarily a question directed towards you,

1 but I -- Matt, I would like to hear -- So, obviously, if you're
2 looking at Alternatives 3 and 4, that is a massive shift from the
3 makeup of that fishery, going from predominantly commercial to
4 predominantly recreational.

5
6 I get the way that this was analyzed with the data, but I would
7 like to hear, in public comment, from some of our commercial
8 representatives, if they could explain why. I mean, when I was
9 looking at the data here, there was a marked shift from commercial
10 to recreational, starting in about 2018, and so I would be curious
11 what happened there. Is it just a behavioral thing? You know,
12 did people just start targeting a different fishery? I would be
13 curious what's actually going on there.

14
15 Then, secondly, I'm wondering if there's other alternatives that
16 we can look at here, that's more of kind of like an equal pain
17 thing, because this is -- Obviously, with the framework, we're
18 doing a 54 percent potential reduction here, and so commercial is
19 almost getting a double whammy on top of that.

20
21 I'm wondering if there's a longer time series that we could
22 potentially look at here, that kind of evens out the historical
23 context and allows for -- I mean, we're setting some of this based
24 on, you know, not nearly as uncertain data as we're going to deal
25 with with deepwater grouper, but, I mean, these are still
26 considered rare-event species. The PSEs for the recreational
27 sector are still make me uncomfortable, quite frankly, even if we
28 go back all the way to 2010, and there's a lot of them where we
29 should proceed with caution. There's several in there that are
30 above 50 percent.

31
32 I'm just wondering if there's other alternatives, maybe looking
33 back in a beyond 2012 inclusion of more current landings, to get
34 what's currently going on with the fishery, but just a thought for
35 another alternative in there, Matt.

36
37 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Thank you for that, and certainly, when the
38 IPT meets, that can be something that we discuss, are, you know,
39 potential other alternatives, and we can address that point, if
40 there's other things that we feel like would be reasonable to bring
41 back to the committee in August. Any other questions?

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Could you remind me -- We're currently monitoring
46 other shallow water grouper in CHTS units for recreational, and
47 this would shift to FES, or MRFSS, and so, yes, although the
48 percentages look like this wild swing, you've got to keep that in

1 mind as well, C.J., that we are shifting from a catch estimation
2 that's considerably lower than the new MRFSS and FES estimates,
3 right, and so, although it looks like we're taking -- Or, you know,
4 a double-whammy for commercial, in your words, right, the reality
5 is we're changing the metric in which we're monitoring
6 recreational, and so keep that in mind.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J.

9
10 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Fair point. We need to find out a better way, where
11 we can visually display that that's actually going on here.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, because I think the bigger concern -- I
14 mean, I think the visual display would be important, right, because
15 it does look like it's a fairly marked shift, right, the among-
16 sector allocations, and one of the things that we want to try to
17 do is to stabilize these fisheries to the best of our ability,
18 right, and so I'm not saying it's right or wrong one way or another,
19 right, but you want to try to avoid huge swings among the sectors,
20 and so all right. Any other comments? All right, Matt. I think
21 we can move on to the next action item.

22
23 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and so, Bernie, if we can move forward to
24 Action 5, and so Action 5 would establish the sector ACL and ACT
25 buffers for the scamp complex and black grouper complex. Again,
26 as we've seen in the last few actions, Alternative 1, where we
27 have new complexes, it would not establish sector buffers between
28 ACL and ACT.

29
30 For Alternative 2, it would establish, for both complexes, a buffer
31 between the ACL and ACT at 4 percent, based off the Generic ACL/AM
32 Amendment, and then, for the scamp complex, it would establish a
33 buffer of 18 percent between the recreational ACL and ACT, using
34 the council's ACL/ACT control rule, and so the recreational sector
35 would be matched to the ACT.

36
37 So, Bernie, if we can scroll down, there's Table 2.5.1 on that
38 page, and so, again, that's a summary right there. There is a 4
39 percent commercial ACL/ACT buffer in place currently with other
40 shallow-water grouper. The 18 percent recreational buffer
41 proposed for the scamp complex would be new in this case.

42
43 I did want to note a few things. When the Reef Fish AP met in
44 December, they made a recommendation, for the scamp complex, that
45 a buffer be considered of 14 percent, and, from what I had in my
46 notes, that was due to some discussion that that would be what the
47 control rule would produce if the scamp and yellowmouth grouper
48 complex is considered as a single stock, given the minuscule

1 landings of yellowmouth grouper. Again, there's going to be some
2 additional conversations with the IPT before August, and so that
3 can be something that we discuss as well.

4
5 The other item here, that would be helpful to have some committee
6 input, is whether or not the 4 percent ACL/ACT buffer is needed.
7 It appears that was primarily driven due to the flexibility measure
8 between other shallow-water grouper and deepwater grouper, since
9 that would cease with the creation of the two new complexes,
10 whether or not that is still needed, and so that would be something
11 that, if the committee wants to discuss at this point, they're
12 welcome to.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J.

15
16 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think that's a viable alternative that
17 we could add in there, just from my perspective, if we're getting
18 rid of the flex option to remove that 4 percent, but I did have a
19 question, actually, if I can go back to the allocation discussion,
20 and the reason why I'm kind of going back is I'm wondering if this
21 is allowable, but can we kind of -- Like I know we're going to
22 have potentially some different years to look at, but I'm wondering
23 if it's possible for kind of a phased-in allocation change approach
24 there, so you're not just having a drastic change from one year to
25 the next, and it kind of could be kind of phased-in, in a percentage
26 across, you know, a set amount of years. Is that something that's
27 doable, or allowable, I guess I should say?

28
29 **DR. FREEMAN:** So I'm going to look to SERO to see. I would like
30 to smile and say anything is feasible, but I would also like to
31 remain friends with SERO, and I don't know how they perceive that.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Matt, you can always be friends with SERO. We
36 won't take it personally. So, in terms of a phase-in, I think the
37 short answer is yes. I think the key is, obviously, the record
38 the council builds, and how you determine that's fair and
39 equitable, and kind of meeting the national standard requirements,
40 but it's -- You know, you mentioned kind of taking kind of an equal
41 reduction, or hit, you know, with regard to the changes in catch
42 limits.

43
44 We've done that several times in the South Atlantic, and so it's
45 something where we have looked at shifting allocation over time,
46 both as we reduce as well as we rebuild back.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Froeschke, and then Mr. Chairman.

1
2 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I guess one thing -- If we look at the landings in
3 I think it's Table 1.1.2 or something, but, if you look at those
4 and the allocations, really, when we developed those alternatives
5 in our -- I think, speaking on behalf of the IPT, those are the
6 equal pain options, by default, because, I mean, you're trying --
7 You have the rescale of the landings, and then you're essentially
8 reducing both sectors by a percentage basis, on an equal amount,
9 and so, you know, that's sort of the default way to do it anyway,
10 and so we would have to think carefully if there was something in
11 addition to that that you wanted to see.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, John. Mr. Chairman. No? Captain
14 Walker.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** I just wanted to point out, and, Ryan, you might be
17 able to help me with this. When the AP, when we discussed, or the
18 AP discussed, taking off that 4 percent, due to the minuscule
19 amount of yellowmouth, didn't we already put a -- Isn't that in
20 here somewhere already in our alternatives, changing it from 18
21 percent to 14 percent? I thought, at the last meeting, we had put
22 that in somewhere.

23
24 **MR. RINDONE:** So a 4 percent buffer isn't applied to the
25 recreational component. The ACL/ACT control rule is what is being
26 used to determine the buffer between the recreational ACL and the
27 recreational ACT. The 4 percent buffer exists on the commercial
28 side, and it goes back to the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, and there
29 was a spreadsheet method that was used to determine that buffer.

30
31 The purpose of it then was to help facilitate these flexibility
32 measures. The amount of landings that are actually being landed
33 between those share categories in that way, like the way that those
34 flexibility measures are used, is not a lot of pounds compared to
35 the commercial ACL, and so, if the flexibility measures no longer
36 exist, the main reason for the 4 percent commercial buffer between
37 the ACL and ACT, or commercial quota, would also not really be
38 there anymore, and, because of that, the Reef Fish AP had
39 recommended removing it, and that recommendation was for both
40 shallow-water and deepwater grouper species.

41
42 **MR. WALKER:** I'm not sure that's what we were talking about. I
43 want to say it was about the 18 percent buffer between the rec ACL
44 and the rec ACT.

45
46 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, just to clarify, what you were asking about was
47 the Reef Fish AP's recommendation to consider a 14 percent buffer?
48 Right, and so we've not made any updates to the document. The

1 last time the document was before the committee was in November,
2 and the Reef Fish AP met in December, and so that hasn't been
3 considered yet, and, if that is something that the committee would
4 certainly like for us to add as an alternative, we're open to a
5 motion at this point.

6
7 **MR. WALKER:** I would like to follow that up, but I don't know that
8 -- It's pretty complex. I don't know that I could do a motion
9 just yet, but I almost want to say we talked about it at the last
10 council meeting. No? Since the AP met, and their recommendations,
11 we didn't vote that up last time?

12
13 **MR. RINDONE:** Not to that specifically. Dylan is here, if you
14 want him to talk about the Reef Fish AP stuff, but I'm just trying
15 to track that conversation, and that there are different reasons
16 for the buffers between the different sectors, ACLs and ACTs.

17
18 **MR. WALKER:** This is specifically about the recreational, and it
19 seemed like 4 percent of that 18 percent buffer was estimated
20 because of yellowmouth, which we agreed was such a small factor in
21 it that we thought we could take 4 percent off, because it was
22 kind of a non-issue.

23
24 **MR. RINDONE:** So that's -- Mathematically, that's not really true,
25 and so the way that the ACL/ACT control rule works is it's based
26 on, you know, whether it's a single stock or a stock assemblage,
27 and, if you're assuming that yellowmouth is inconsequential, I
28 mean, you could shift it to saying that it's just a single stock,
29 and you do get a little bit of a reduction there, but it doesn't
30 negate the fact that we still manage yellowmouth.

31
32 Yellowmouth is included in the stock assessment that's being used
33 to inform the catch limits, and so yellowmouth is still a component
34 of all the math that's going into the catch limits, even if it
35 does play a small role, and so now, ultimately, the council has
36 the ability to say what they want the buffer to be, and they can
37 make a decision on that based on factors that don't include the
38 ACL/ACT control rule, but, if you're going to use the ACL/ACT
39 control rule, then you have to use it the way that it's designed.
40 If you want to ignore yellowmouth in that regard, then pick a
41 different buffer and give a reason why you think that's going to
42 be better.

43
44 **MR. WALKER:** All right. I would like to see if we could bring up
45 the AP discussion on this particular issue, because I think we
46 hammered this out, or the AP went over this quite a bit, and so
47 maybe, for the purposes of discussion later on, we could bring up
48 what the AP had to say about this particular issue.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I'm going to go ahead, Matt, if it's all right,
3 and let John weigh-in on a couple of things we were just
4 discussing.

5
6 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and so the way that it's currently calculated
7 is described in Appendix A in the back of the document. A couple
8 of things. If we were to go -- On the bad side, if we were to go
9 -- Scroll all the way down, and that teal color, I guess, based on
10 the projections that -- Where it currently says stock biomass is
11 below BMSY, but above the MSST. Well, if we go with those
12 projections, assumably that would no longer be true, and so that
13 would increase the weighting factor, which would then suggest an
14 additional buffer.

15
16 My, I guess, thought though was, in looking at this, the black
17 grouper, we don't really have a buffer, and I don't know that the
18 council is obligated to follow the control rule, necessarily, and
19 maybe they could just determine what they thought is a
20 scientifically or management-defensible buffer, for example 10
21 percent, and just set it at that, and determine that this isn't
22 appropriate for this use case, because of the mixed stock thing,
23 but it's really one stock, and there are a lot of different factors
24 in here, but that might be a different way to go, but I just wanted
25 to kind of point that out, about the difficulty of understanding
26 the stock status, the SDC, and all that it circles through many
27 actions in the document.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker.

30
31 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. The AP chair is here, and he has
32 informed me that he's up on this discussion. We've had this very
33 discussion, and it's just I can't remember the whole thing, and so
34 if we could bring Dylan up here to fill us in on what the AP came
35 up with, I think that would be helpful.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure. Go ahead, Captain Hubbard.

38
39 **MR. DYLAN HUBBARD:** So, in regard to the Reef Fish AP discussion,
40 we were specifically talking about the rec ABC control rule, in
41 regard to including yellowmouth in with scamp, and, because
42 yellowmouth and scamp are bundled together in the ABC control rule,
43 and I believe it was in this appendix, but there was basically I
44 believe a 4 percent increased buffer because yellowmouth were
45 included in this, and what the AP discussed is, hey, recreational
46 anglers didn't ask for yellowmouth and scamp to be included
47 together.

1 This is something that's being pushed on us, and so why are we
2 getting penalized with a bigger buffer, because of uncertainty
3 that's created from something outside of our control, and so that's
4 what the AP voted on, to remove that additional buffer in that ABC
5 control rule specifically.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Dylan. Ed.

8
9 **MR. WALKER:** So maybe, at some point, if the staff could bring up
10 that motion, that would be helpful to look at. Here it comes.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It looks like there it is.

13
14 **MR. WALKER:** Good job, staff.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so that's the AP's motion, right, to
17 recommend a consideration of a 14 percent ACL/ACT buffer for the
18 recreational sector of the scamp and yellowmouth grouper. Mr.
19 Rindone.

20
21 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, to that, if you were
22 to -- Based on the rationale that's being discussed, if you were
23 to exclude yellowmouth, and considerate of what Dr. Froeschke said
24 about the fact that, you know, yellowmouth -- Or that scamp is
25 being considered overfished under the new projections, and modify
26 the control in that way, you would have a 15 percent buffer, but,
27 again, that's also keeping in mind that the projections that the
28 SSC reviewed are for scamp and yellowmouth, as is the assessment
29 for scamp and yellowmouth.

30
31 All the science underpinning the catch recommendations still
32 includes both species, and so how you guys navigate that, and it
33 maintains consistency with best science, is something that you
34 would have to discuss.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** I think the reason this discussion came up, and I
39 forget the number, but the percentage of yellowmouth to scamp in
40 the recreational catch is like 98 percent to 2 percent, or some
41 really low number, and that's why the AP thought that maybe it
42 could -- It was a small enough number where it could just be tossed
43 completely.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Andy, go ahead.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So a lot of moving parts here. I guess a couple
48 of thoughts. We have essentially two alternatives. The

1 alternatives tie together commercial and recreational buffers,
2 right, and would it be beneficial, from an IPT standpoint, and
3 maybe this is something the IPT just goes back and looks at,
4 splitting out into a commercial buffer alternative and a
5 recreational buffer alternative. I don't know if that's better or
6 worse, right, but then it also could provide the range of
7 alternatives under each, including potentially additional buffers
8 for consideration.

9
10 The other aspect, which I guess I'm confused by, and so I
11 understand why the flexibility measures would no longer be
12 applicable, because we're splitting the complex, but, essentially,
13 are we, in this action, saying they're going to go away? How are
14 we handling elimination of the flexibility measures, if in fact
15 that's what the council wants to do in the amendment?

16
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** By not being reestablished under the new share
20 categories, it wouldn't exist anymore, because the way that it
21 currently exists is based on the other shallow-water grouper and
22 deepwater grouper share categories, and the species they're in,
23 and so, if the other shallow-water grouper share category goes
24 away, and instead you now have two new share categories, that rule
25 isn't established for those new share categories, and so it
26 wouldn't exist anymore. It's not a thing to handle, really.

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So we're just -- We would document that someplace
29 in this amendment at that point, that it would be disappearing.
30 Okay. So then, kind of going along those lines, primarily species
31 like speckled hind, which is in the deepwater grouper complex --
32 A good portion of that, or a certain portion of that, is landed
33 under shallow-water grouper quota, and so we would be eliminating
34 that as a flexibility measure, and I don't know how critical that
35 is to the commercial industry.

36
37 We essentially would be posing a little bit more of a regulatory
38 requirement, the way I'm viewing it under the executive orders,
39 versus maintaining that requirement, and so I would like to hear
40 from the commercial industry a little bit more about the
41 flexibility measures before we just eliminate them entirely,
42 because I think there is potentially options where we could
43 maintain them under the new complex approach, but have to split it
44 out differently.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I think -- Again, C.J. and I were just
47 talking a little bit, and I know that we've discussed this in the
48 past, right, about how much of an impact that might be on the

1 industry, and I can -- I would just encourage folks to go back and
2 look at the minutes as it relates to that discussion, but I was
3 confused, Andy, when you were looking at this as more of imposing
4 an additional regulatory burden.

5
6 Part of me wants to think that, if you alleviated that, or part
7 the flexibility -- That part of it went away, that you're
8 decoupling the world, right, and it's getting rid of some
9 regulation, and so, again, I'm not sure I quite understood why you
10 thought that it's -- Go ahead.

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, I think it could be viewed
13 multiple ways. The way I'm thinking of it is, if someone doesn't
14 have the other quota category, and is using the flexibility measure
15 to land it under another category, right, that you've essentially
16 opened up access to them that they otherwise would be prevented
17 from landing that fish.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I got it. Thank you. Ed.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** So, if I'm not mistaken, a lot of that speckled hind
22 landings was really due to the price of the allocation of those
23 species at the time, and you could save a buck-fifty if you used
24 your -- Whatever the other one was, and back and forth.

25
26 The best I can tell, it was not -- This flexibility measure was
27 not critical to the fishermen that I know, or myself, and I think
28 the landings might be skewed, and just -- Not skewed, but it gives
29 the impression that they really needed it, but really they were
30 using it because the allocation for that one was cheaper than the
31 other one, and they were changing it around.

32
33 I'm not sure that this flexibility measures on any of the groupers
34 was really used a lot for the purpose it was intended, which was,
35 if I'm not mistaken, when you run out of something, and you have
36 some, you can cover that catch that day when you run out. It was
37 more swapping of accounts, and emptying one account so you could
38 use a flexibility measure over here and there, and so I personally
39 am okay with elimination of the flexibility measures.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Stephen.

42
43 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Yes, and so just a little bit about the
44 flexibility measures, and so the system automatic does it. You
45 can only land speckled hind under shallow-water grouper when you've
46 completely emptied your vessel and shareholder account of all
47 deepwater grouper.

48

1 So, if you're a smaller fisherman with only one vessel and one
2 account, you're totally going to be out of your deepwater grouper
3 before you land it under shallow-water. In 2022 and 2023, 71
4 percent of all speckled hind were landed under shallow-water.
5 That's their secondary category.

6
7 There could be -- If you have more vessels under different
8 shareholder account names, you can play allocation games and move
9 your deepwater out, but I don't think we've delved into how many
10 of these are smaller fishermen, versus larger fishermen that are
11 potentially moving it, and so I just want to bring that to
12 everyone's attention.

13
14 So, again, 71 percent of speckled hind has been landed under
15 shallow-water grouper, and that makes, out of all the shallow-
16 water grouper landings, 14 percent of those are speckled hind, and
17 so flipping which way you're looking at it, but there is a
18 significant -- When you look at scamp and warsaw, the other two
19 species, they are primarily landed under their primary category,
20 and not their secondary category.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** If I can ask a real quick question, Jessica, on
23 that, and so, those percentages, how do those equate to actual
24 pounds?

25
26 **DR. STEPHEN:** Give me a second, and I can probably tell you.

27
28 **MR. RINDONE:** Jessica, if I remember, it was like 24,000 pounds of
29 speckled hind, or something like that, on average.

30
31 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and so --

32
33 **MR. RINDONE:** Specifically the speckled hind.

34
35 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and so speckled hind was around 24,000 pounds
36 landed under the shallow-water category, versus 9,000 pounds
37 landed under the deepwater.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, but relatively small amounts of fish,
40 right? Okay. Dr. Simmons.

41
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't know,
43 Dr. Stephen or Mr. Strelcheck, if you guys can answer this right
44 now, but I know one of the reasons we had to do the framework for
45 scamp and yellowmouth is the administrative changes that were going
46 to have to happen with IFQ program, and I guess my question to you
47 all is, by removing these flexibility measures, would that
48 streamline the administrative changes that have to take place by

1 establishing two separate complexes moving forward and updating
2 this new catch advice? Does that help streamline the
3 administrative piece of this program if the council continues to
4 move forward with eliminating that?

5
6 **DR. STEPHEN:** I would say it's probably neutral in the long run,
7 and so, if we were switching to the new categories, we would just
8 switch code out within the system to do it. If we're removing it,
9 we would have to go through and search everywhere and remove it,
10 and so both ways are kind of neutral, in respect to that.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Carrie.

13
14 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I guess I'll have to talk to you some
15 more about that. I guess I was a little confused, because the
16 tracking of that, once it's exhausted, but maybe I don't
17 understand.

18
19 **DR. STEPHEN:** It's all built into logic code within the system,
20 right, and the system makes the decisions. We would just change
21 the logic from the shallow-water to whatever the new named category
22 is, and so that change, if we kept the flexibility with the new
23 share category that scamp is in, would just be a swapping, find
24 and replace, and think of it that way. If we were getting rid of
25 the flexibility measures, we would do a find and delete in our
26 code to get rid of it, and so both of them are the same amount of
27 work.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Captain Walker.

30
31 **MR. WALKER:** Just one more thought, maybe to make getting rid of
32 the flexibility measures more palatable, and so a commercial
33 shareholder, if I'm not mistaken, would actually get more of a
34 higher ACL, if you will, if this wasn't being withheld from his
35 account, right, and so to go into a buffer, which he might not
36 even use. A flexibility that's being used by some other guy is
37 actually being taken out of his account, if he doesn't do the
38 flexibility thing, and so, if there is no flexibility,
39 theoretically, he gets a bigger number of allocation for the year
40 to use at his disposal.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. All right, and so, Matt, I guess, from
43 your perspective, we've got a number of things that we've discussed
44 in this action item, right, and so there's some options, moving
45 forward, about how you might break out the commercial and the
46 recreational buffer parts of this, and perhaps have a range of
47 alternatives in there, and what direction do you want from the
48 council before you bring this back, specifically?

1
2 **DR. FREEMAN:** Well, I appreciate Andy's input. I was thinking it
3 was a little light on actions, and so I'm glad he suggested
4 breaking one into two, but, no, I think, given the discussion
5 that's been had, that seems like a good route to propose to the
6 IPT, that we have one focus on the recreational sector and one
7 focus on the commercial sector, in terms of the ACL/ACT buffers.

8
9 Given the discussion around the percentages, we can bring a range
10 of alternatives in August, and then, given that, if there's some
11 in August that you all no longer want to consider, we can remove
12 at that point.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. I think then, if you feel like you've
15 got enough direction at this point, we'll go ahead and move to the
16 next action item.

17
18 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and so, Bernie, this will be Action 6. Okay,
19 and so Action 6 establishes a recreational sector accountability
20 measure for the scamp complex and the black grouper complex.
21 Again, this is an older version.

22
23 Some of the conversation that staff has been having, in terms of
24 moving from this to what the committee would see in August, is
25 that, unless there's any strong objections, and certainly we can
26 still receive feedback tomorrow, is that we would move forward by
27 modeling the alternatives for Action 6 based on Action 3 in Reef
28 Fish 58B, and I know that's coming up shortly.

29
30 I don't know if you all want to open that document, as a quick
31 reminder of what Action 3 refers to, or not at this point, or if
32 you all want to see that and then delve into that discussion in
33 Full Council tomorrow, but that was -- That's kind of our thoughts
34 at this point. If you all want, we can pull up Action 3 from 58B
35 real quick, just so you all can kind of get a glimpse at this
36 point.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes. Go ahead. Let's do that, just so we can
39 familiarize ourselves with that.

40
41 **DR. FREEMAN:** All right, and so Bernie, Reef Fish 58B, if you could
42 open that one, and go to Action 3. Is it the next agenda item?

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It is.

45
46 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. This one has four alternatives, and the
47 council has already selected a preferred. Bernie, if you could
48 scroll down, when you get a moment, so they could see Alternative

1 4, which is the current preferred. Like I said, this is something
2 that IPT would discuss for August, unless there's some strong
3 objections to that, and I see a question from SERO.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Levy.

6
7 **MS. LEVY:** I don't have a strong objection discussing. I guess I
8 just want to note that the difference between deepwater and the
9 shallow-water is that you have the scamp complex, which is
10 potentially in an overfished status, and so modeling it strictly
11 on deepwater, which only has post-season, and potentially not like
12 paybacks, and, I mean, I just think it's a different situation.

13
14 We could certainly consider some of these alternatives, but we
15 need to also think about the fact that, once we implement 58A, you
16 know, it's rebuilding, and so we don't want to have overages that
17 we're not addressing. We don't want to go two years before we --
18 You know, we don't want to let it go over and then decide to close,
19 and so it's a bit of a different situation.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So, Matt, I guess, again, this is a discussion
22 that you probably would have in the IPT, about what an appropriate
23 range of alternatives might look like in 58A, right?

24
25 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly. The main thing here being that we
26 recognize this is one of the actions that needs updating before
27 August, and so, when the IPT meets, that was one thing that I was
28 going to suggest for discussion, and I'm certain we'll probably
29 have other ideas for what a reasonable range of alternatives would
30 be.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. C.J.

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, just for the record, Matt, I'm in favor
35 of that approach.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so I think you've got some pretty
38 decent direction on that, and so we'll go to Action 7 in 58A.

39
40 **DR. FREEMAN:** Action 7 would be to establish a fixed recreational
41 closed season for the scamp complex and the black grouper complex.
42 I have made some notes for myself from this morning's discussion,
43 and it sounds like the committee would like to see, for August,
44 different seasons for the two complexes, if I have it correctly in
45 my notes, for consideration to potentially explore having no
46 closure for the black grouper complex.

47
48 Then one of the other things that, again, as we're updating this,

1 and having conversations when the IPT meets, is that we might, for
2 the scamp complex, look at the preferred alternative from the
3 framework, and so that might be the range that we consider for
4 August, based off the committee discussion, and certainly, if
5 there's any other thoughts, please let me know, and I can bring
6 that to the IPT for discussion.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Froeschke.

9
10 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So what I was thinking, similar to what we just
11 talked about for the AMs, is that we would essentially bring the
12 range of alternatives that were just considered in the framework
13 action back, but likely they would only be considered for the scamp
14 and yellowmouth grouper.

15
16 If you look at what the values for the ACT for the black grouper
17 complex, it looks like the rec ACL would be 83,000. I think that's
18 right, and, if you look at the landings, it doesn't look like we
19 would closely approach that, and so I don't see any need for that
20 as part of this document, unless you all -- For the black grouper
21 complex recreational season closure alternatives. I don't see any
22 basis that we would even have those.

23
24 It would just be the scamp, and so, for example, this Action 7
25 would just be establish a fixed recreational closed season for the
26 scamp complex, full stop, and you would have alternatives for the
27 scamp complex, and then there wouldn't be any for the black grouper
28 complex at all, and then it would just go back to how it is.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I think I agree with that. I guess the
31 question that I have, and it relates to the discussion we had
32 earlier in the day, right, and so, in order to get to that point,
33 this document 58A has to move along relatively quickly, right, and
34 so there are a couple of things that are going to happen.

35
36 You're going to come back, and you're going to make some changes
37 to the document in August, right, and then, because things like
38 black grouper are co-managed, essentially, you're going to have to
39 have some discussion, right, amongst two SSCs, potentially, if
40 there's catch advice, right, if you end up splitting these things
41 out.

42
43 I don't know this, and I'm just talking it through it, right,
44 because part of the charge here is to talk about how fast -- What
45 the timing of the development of this document is. Go ahead, John.

46
47 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I think, for that part, the SSC looked at that and
48 provided it for the Gulf component of the black grouper and

1 yellowfin complex, and so I think we are set on the catch limits
2 for the black grouper side in the Gulf.
3
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Until we get a more complete
5 assessment at some point in the future, potentially, for black
6 grouper, jointly with the South Atlantic Council.
7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Right, but that assessment is coming due in
9 September, right? C.J., I will -- FWC is in charge of this
10 assessment, right?
11
12 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and we've been told the final report in
13 September.
14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So that was the nature of my question, right,
16 and so, if you have an assessment that comes, and it's available
17 in September, ultimately it's going to have to be reviewed, right,
18 by both SSCs, and then you're going to get catch advice, updated
19 catch advice, and, in order to incorporate that, right, you would
20 have to do that almost in November, and, in order to get this
21 implemented in 2027, which gets to Ed's point earlier, you know.
22 Go ahead, John.
23
24 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So is the product that's being prepared in summer
25 is going to be appropriate for the basis of new catch advice? I
26 guess that's not something that we were totally up to speed on.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J. or Jessica?
29
30 **DR. SWEETMAN:** We would have to check with Luiz on that one.
31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I would just -- Again, we can certainly talk to
33 Luiz over the phone at lunch. I just wanted to bring it up,
34 because part of the charge under this particular agenda item was
35 to think about what is the timeline of the development of this
36 document look like, and what are the implications, right, of moving
37 it along faster or slowing it down. Okay. C.J.
38
39 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just a question here. John, you're basically saying
40 that, for Action 7 here, what we would look at in August would be
41 only explicitly for scamp, and setting up the season, and so my
42 question then is how does this interact with the framework, where
43 we did just set a season for black, and then what you're telling
44 me is that, by just simply putting in a season for scamp, that it
45 would magically go away for black grouper. There's no -- We
46 wouldn't need to put an explicit action in there, and that there's
47 no season to counteract basically the framework.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. John, to that point, and then I see Mara
2 has her hand up.

3
4 **DR. FROESCHKE:** My understanding is two complexes, and so, each
5 new complex, you're going to have to establish any rules,
6 requirements, guidelines that you want, and so anything that you
7 don't explicitly outline is not going to be in there.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mara.

10
11 **MS. LEVY:** Thanks. I was going to say that, and, also, just to
12 the timing, and so, I mean, I guess I didn't realize that there
13 was going to be a new black grouper assessment that you might want
14 to consider, but I guess I would caution against slowing this down
15 based on that, like just because we still have this scamp advice
16 that needs to get implemented.

17
18 The longer we have catch levels that are higher than what the
19 assessment says, the more trouble you're going to have rebuilding,
20 right, because, based on the projections we have, it's supposed to
21 rebuild the stock, but, if we keep not implementing it, which is
22 what happened, then the catch levels go down more, and the
23 rebuilding time goes up, and so I guess we do the best with what
24 we have, and then, if there's a new assessment for black grouper,
25 maybe we deal with that after.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and, again, just for the record, I wasn't
28 trying to advocate that we slow anything down. I just was trying
29 to figure out how that -- By having that assessment pop up in
30 September, you know, how that may affect timing. Dr. Simmons.

31
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we can
33 certainly work with FWC further offline, but I was just looking up
34 the update we received during the February SEDAR Steering Committee
35 meeting, and that was the black grouper management strategy
36 evaluation organized by FWC began in 2024.

37
38 The SSC received a draft of that, I believe in May of 2025, or
39 March of 2025, and there was a lot of work that still need to be
40 done on that, but then, due to funding constraints, the project is
41 on hold. The hope is to have it completed in 2026, and the SEDAR
42 may provide a peer review of the product, once it is complete, and
43 that's the most recent information I have.

44
45 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, to that point, I mean, I was literally
46 asking Luiz about an update on this black grouper MSE like two
47 days ago, and this is what he told me, is that final report in
48 September of this year. They got the funding situated, worked

1 out, and then they have already been reworking on it as we speak.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, C.J. I'm looking around the room
4 right now, but I'm also going to take a second to look closely at
5 the alternatives here with regard to the scamp open and close
6 dates, and so there's -- In Alternative 2, for example, the scamp
7 complex will be closed from January through April and then reopen
8 in May, and so there may be a number of alternatives to consider
9 there, right, and I'll wait until we hear some public comment.
10 I've heard some thoughts on what's an appropriate open and close
11 season for that, and so I didn't want to restrict the range of
12 alternatives here, right? Okay. Matt.

13
14 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure, and so, again, any feedback on that, even
15 tomorrow, is appreciated. You know, again, I think, for scamp,
16 the primary thing would be bringing over what's going to be in the
17 framework action, but, if there's anything currently in this
18 document that you all would still like to retain for consideration,
19 please let us know. Otherwise, we may just shift those out.
20 Again, this would be part of IPT discussion as well, and I see a
21 comment.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Levy.

24
25 **MS. LEVY:** Just a question that I thought of related to that, and
26 so, when you say bring over from the framework, so right now we're
27 doing the closed season based on a start date, and then, when we
28 project the recreational portion is going to be caught, because
29 there is no recreational catch limit, right, and so there's no
30 mechanism to close, and is that what you're talking about, because,
31 in this case, we're establishing a recreational catch limit, and
32 we're going to have a closure provision, presumably, and I'm just
33 going to assume, and so we wouldn't need that, you know, fixed end
34 close date, unless that's what the council wanted to do.

35
36 I guess I just wanted some clarity as to what was coming back. Is
37 it strictly going to be what we have in the shallow-water grouper,
38 or are we just talking about the start date, and then we project
39 when it's going to be closed, and that information is included?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** John.

42
43 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, my first thought is it would just be the
44 start date, because the catch levels are going to be different,
45 and so there's no guarantee that, for example, opening July 1 will
46 get you all the way to the end, and so I see two possible options.

47
48 You could either come back to the council and say, well, if you

1 went to July 1, you'd only get to December 1. If you want to get
2 to December 31, you would have to bump it back to July 15, or we
3 could work on that.

4
5 The other thing is just depending on if you change the
6 accountability measures to say, well, going forward, we're going
7 to monitor it in-season, and so you would just open on July 1, but
8 we're going to do something in season, and, if we project it's
9 going to be caught before the end of the year, you would have to
10 do an in-season closure, and so I'm not sure which way it would be
11 preferable to the council, but that's, I guess, the two ways I
12 would envision it, but, just in general, the start date is what I
13 was envisioning as the basis.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm thinking of it from an administrative burden
18 standpoint, and so I'm thinking a little bit reverse to the
19 council, and so, from a fisherman's standpoint, I can see the,
20 ideally, flexibility open July 1. We'll see, obviously, how long
21 the season goes, and then close.

22
23 Given that Actions 4 and 5 would result in some pretty substantial
24 differences in catch limits, right, just specifying the start date
25 could be like a false positive, because we know some of those are
26 not going to get to the end of the year, right, based on catch
27 levels, and so I think it would be prudent to look at aligning at
28 least some of our season estimates, and bring that back to us based
29 on those catch limits, so that we would have a start date, and a
30 potential end date, as well as the open-ended season, like you're
31 suggesting, with some sort of Regional Office monitoring that could
32 happen.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Matt, are you feeling pretty good about
35 direction with regard to this action item?

36
37 **DR. FREEMAN:** That might have been a stronger word than I would
38 have used, but I do believe I have some direction. Yes, sir.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I was going to say something witty, but I checked
41 my mind. All right, and so we're ahead of action items, right,
42 and we've had some discussion about the timeline, but I think we'll
43 know a lot more, obviously, when this document comes back to the
44 council in August, and so we're pretty close to a lunchbreak, Mr.
45 Chairman. I'll leave it up to you.

46
47 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. We're scheduled for lunchbreak
48 at 12:15. We are ahead of schedule. I would suggest we take our

1 lunch break now, for thirty minutes. Let's take a thirty-minute
2 lunchbreak.

3
4 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on June 3, 2025.)

5
6 - - -

7
8 June 3, 2025

9
10 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

11
12 - - -

13
14 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council reconvened
15 at the Gulf Council Office in Tampa, Florida on Tuesday afternoon,
16 June 3, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We will go ahead and jump into Agenda Item IX,
19 which is Public Hearing Draft for Reef Fish Amendment 58B:
20 Modifications to the Deepwater Grouper Management Measures, and I
21 think Mr. Rindone is going to lead us through that action item.

22
23 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 58B: MODIFICATIONS TO**
24 **DEEPWATER GROUPER MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

25
26 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, sir, and so we're going to present the
27 public hearing draft to you guys that proposes modifications for
28 deepwater grouper. The only species in the complex that's had a
29 stock assessment is yellowedge grouper, and, while it's not
30 overfished, the stock assessment did estimate that overfishing was
31 occurring, and so we're going to be looking at several measures
32 for deepwater grouper, including status determination criteria,
33 catch limits, sector allocations, and accountability measures.

34
35 You guys should discuss the actions and alternatives presented,
36 including the current preferred alternatives and suggest any
37 revisions, if necessary, and you guys can also recommend to the
38 council to approve the document for public hearings. Right now,
39 we're currently planning for three in-person hearings in Florida
40 and one virtual hearing. I think there's a little bit at the end
41 of that, Bernie, and so then we'll -- At least at this point, we'll
42 plan on bringing it back in August for final action.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Ryan, and so I guess we can
45 -- I mean, we've got three action items in the document. I think
46 we've got preferreds picked for two of those, and so we'll revisit
47 those, and then we still should probably lean towards picking a
48 preferred for Action Item 2, and so, if you would just go through

1 the action items, Ryan, that would be great.

2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and sure thing, and it would -- It is always
4 helpful to the public for you guys to have preferreds picked for
5 each of the actions, just so they have an idea of where the council
6 is thinking about going with things.

7
8 Leading off in -- For the first action, which is modification of
9 the MSY proxy overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, and
10 complex annual catch limit, Alternative 1 describes the no action
11 alternative, and you guys currently prefer Alternative 2, which
12 would revise the MSY proxy and catch limits based on the SSC's
13 recommendations.

14
15 It would use an MSY proxy of fishing at 40 percent SPR for all
16 four species, and it combines catch limit projections for
17 yellowedge grouper based on the SEDAR 85 stock assessment, and
18 then the other three species of warsaw, snowy, and speckled hind
19 based on Tier 3 of the council's ABC control rule, and that gets
20 you an OFL of 731,035 pounds gutted weight and an ABC of 555,026
21 pounds gutted weight. This is a sizable reduction from the status
22 quo, which was in MRFSS units, and the preferred Alternative 2 is
23 in MRIP-FES units.

24
25 The commercial sector still accounts for a very large portion of
26 the total catch in recent years, about 90 percent, and so the
27 effect of using MRIP-FES is tempered, because the majority of the
28 landings history is still attributable to the commercial sector,
29 and so, when you're comparing, you know, where we are now to where
30 we're going under a Preferred Alternative 2, it's just something
31 to think about, and so, Mr. Chair.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so,
34 again, we've had a fair amount of discussion in recent council
35 meetings about this particular action item, and the reason that we
36 settled on this preferred, and so I just -- You know, if it's the
37 will of the committee to move on, or to revisit this, and now is
38 the time. Mr. Strelcheck.

39
40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Not directly related to the alternatives, but
41 Mara and I were just talking, and one of the things that we've
42 recently proposed in the South Atlantic for red snapper is a more
43 generic definition for MSY proxies.

44
45 We essentially put in, or we're proposing to put in, place "or a
46 reasonable proxy based on the best scientific information
47 available, consistent with National Standard 2". In doing so, it
48 kind of gets us out of this constant do-loop of, if the proxy

1 changes, whether it's 30 percent, 35, 40 percent, that we have to
2 then go in and update it with every single management plan and
3 amendment to the management plan.

4
5 I'm not necessarily suggesting we do it here in deepwater grouper,
6 but, if we wanted to consider something like that, there's an
7 opportunity, I think, where we could do that for our reef fish
8 species, and other species that we manage, and just give us some
9 flexibility, so that, if things change over time, both up or down,
10 that it provides for that best scientific information available.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I like that ability to kind of like, you know,
13 generalize a little bit, and it keeps you a little more nimble, a
14 little more flexible. I mean, again, I don't know, Andy, though
15 If you made a change like that, or a generic change, to the language
16 in these types of documents, is that going to affect any analysis
17 at all in this document? Have you guys talked about that?

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't think so. I mean, you still have to talk
20 about then what is that proxy going to be, and, in this case, we
21 would be going with the F 40 percent SPR proxy, and so it would
22 just be generically defining it for deepwater grouper, and so one
23 of my thoughts is, you know, we could come back to this, with
24 another broader amendment, and look at it more holistically across
25 reef fish, or across all of our managed species, if that's
26 something that council is open to, rather than just addressing it
27 directly with deepwater grouper, but I wanted to bring it to the
28 council's attention, because I feel like we're getting into a
29 situation where we're having to update proxies frequently, and
30 this might be at least alleviating one burden on the council and
31 the future actions.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I like that. It's a good suggestion. Ryan.

34
35 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and, just to that, I mean, since it could also
36 apply to CMP species, a generic amendment does seem to be the more
37 appropriate path for that.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. C.J.

40
41 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I just want to -- I think that's a good idea, Andy,
42 and I'm with Ryan. I think applying it across-the-board for reef
43 fish and CMP species makes a lot of sense, and a broader amendment
44 will allow us to be more flexible here.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Any other discussion? Dr. Simmons.

47
48 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I thought

1 we already had that on the books for reef fish anyways in Amendment
2 48, and we're trying to find it, where it has to -- It doesn't
3 necessarily have to be an alternative, but we have to note in a
4 full plan amendment the change to the proxy, but I was trying to
5 pull up that exact language, and so I thought we already had that
6 in place for reef fish, but the reason we had to do this here, I
7 thought, is because this was a status determination criteria for
8 the complex.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Levy.

11
12 **MS. LEVY:** We have it such that it can get updated in the plan
13 amendment without doing actions and alternatives, but my
14 understanding was, and I have to look at it more closely, what the
15 South Atlantic did, is it's a little bit different than that, but
16 we can look at it and get back to you, because that was more than
17 also the council could decide to still look at actions and
18 alternatives, right? It was like you could just adopt it, or not
19 adopt it, but it didn't seem to be exactly what was happening with
20 the South Atlantic flexibility measures.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so it's clearly something that we can
23 circle around on. You know, it doesn't necessarily affect the
24 wording in this amendment, right, but something that the council
25 will want to consider moving forward. I'm not seeing any appetite
26 necessarily to move away from the preferred here, and so if you
27 want to move to Action 2, that would be great.

28
29 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. Bernie, moving on, and so this one would
30 look at deepwater grouper sector ACLs and sector allocations, and
31 it assumes that you guys are going to prefer Alternative 2 in
32 Action 1, and so Alternative 1, and all the subsequent alternatives
33 in Action 2, are going to reflect that. This is one where you
34 guys don't currently have a preferred alternative selected, and so
35 this would be one to think about that.

36
37 Alternative 1 would -- It states that the Generic ACL/AM Amendment
38 allocated ninety-six-and-a-half percent of the deepwater grouper
39 complex ACL to the commercial sector, and that was based on
40 landings from 2001 to 2004, and it left the recreational sector's
41 ACL unspecified. The issue with leaving it unspecified is it makes
42 application of accountability measures difficult.

43
44 In all of these alternatives, the complex ACL would be set equal
45 to the complex ABC, and so, for Alternative 1, based on an OFL of
46 731,000 pounds, and an ABC of about 555,000 pounds, you know, that
47 leaves you with the commercial ACL, or commercial quota, which is
48 4 percent lower than the ACL, and the recreational ACL, as shown

1 in that table.

2

3 If we go down to Alternative 2, Alternative 2 is essentially the
4 exact same thing as Alternative 1, except, instead of leaving the
5 recreational ACL unspecified, it sets the recreational ACL equal
6 to three-and-a-half percent of the complex ACL, and so that gets
7 you that 19,426 pounds that you guys see there.

8

9 Moving on down, and so Alternative 3, again setting the complex
10 ACL equal to the complex ABC, establishes a recreational ACL and
11 sector allocation based on the average recreational landings from
12 the most recent five years of 2019 to 2023, and this results in a
13 recreational ACL of 56,649 pounds, or about 10.21 percent, of the
14 complex ACL, and then the commercial sector essentially gets the
15 rest, and things shake out as you guys see in the table there.

16

17 The difference with this one is that it's basically the inverse of
18 what was done in Alternative 1 and 2. In this version of it, the
19 most recent five years were used to determine what the recreational
20 fraction would be, and then the commercial sector would get the
21 rest.

22

23 Alternative 4 would establish a recreational ACL and sector
24 allocation based on an equal reduction in the landings from the
25 recreational and commercial sectors from the most recent five
26 years, and you guys can revisit those landings, if you like, in
27 Table 1.1.2, such that the sector ACLs don't exceed the complex
28 ACL, and so this is using landings data for both sectors, and it
29 shakes out that the recreational ACL is about 37,964 pounds, or
30 about 6.84 percent, of the complex ACL, and the commercial sector
31 gets the rest. You can see all that there.

32

33 Something that we'll note in here, when we go back and we're
34 working on the document, is that, in the event that the flexibility
35 measures are eliminated in 58A, we would no longer have the
36 commercial quota decreased by 4 percent from the commercial ACL.
37 The commercial quota would be equal to the commercial ACL, and so
38 that's language that we'll add after this meeting.

39

40 Again, you've got four alternatives here, and, before we consider
41 taking it out to public hearing, it would certainly benefit the
42 public to know what the council is thinking.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Any
45 preferences? Anybody want to speak in favor of a particular
46 alternative here? Dr. Banks.

47

48 **DR. BANKS:** I just have a quick clarification. In the Table 2.2.1,

1 under Alternative 3, that's the only one that would have no
2 recreational closure, correct, and, in Alternative 4, it's
3 projected as a September 14th closure?
4

5 **MR. RINDONE:** Not exactly, and so, based on the three-year average,
6 that's where that lands, but there's still the possibility of a
7 recreational closure even under Alternative 3, and so, if you look
8 at the landings history in Table 1.1.2, and you think about that
9 56,000 pounds, there are definitely years when the deepwater
10 grouper recreational landings exceed 56,000 pounds.
11

12 Depending on how consistently that were estimated to be happening,
13 you could have an accountability measure, depending on which one
14 you chose, that could be triggering and closing that recreational
15 season early, and so there doesn't exist an allocation scenario in
16 the document right now that the recreational sector would have
17 zero chance, period, of having a closure. The lowest chance is
18 with Alternative 3.
19

20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Banks.
21

22 **DR. BANKS:** Okay, and so, with that, I think I prefer Alternative
23 3, since it has minimal rec closures. That said, do you know what
24 the percentage of a closure in Alternative 4 would be, like the
25 difference, and are we likely to have -- I mean, I understand
26 there's closures in both, but are we likely to have a closure every
27 year in Alternative 4 or --
28

29 **MR. RINDONE:** If we go to -- It's under Action 3. It's Table --
30 There we go. It's Table 3.3.1, which is based on you guys' current
31 preferred accountability measure of Alternative 4 in Action 3, and
32 it shows you, with the red boxes, whether that particular
33 accountability measure would have been in place for that particular
34 recreational ACL, and so, if we're only using the data that are
35 shown in this table, call it a twice as likely under using the
36 ACL, recreational ACL, under Alternative 4 in Action 2 with your
37 current preferred in Action 3. I mean, simply enough,
38 arithmetically, the lower the recreational ACL, the higher the
39 probability of an accountability measure being triggered.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.
42

43 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So I'm kind of questioning how that was calculated,
44 Ryan, and so, looking at Alternative 3, you know, I think you've
45 highlighted in there that the recreational landings would have
46 exceeded the ACL three of the last five years, and so, getting to
47 the question as to how the rec season projections to not have any
48 closure, even though we would have exceeded it in a majority of

1 those five years, I'm just wondering how -- Is it because of the
2 three-year average that you use for the season projections, and
3 those three-year averages included the only two years where there
4 was no closure? Is that what kind of factors into this here?
5

6 **MR. RINDONE:** For the season duration projections there in Table
7 2.2.1, it was just the most recent three years that was used. In
8 the other table, that's part of the accountability measures, I
9 just tried to show you guys more information.

10
11 If we were to use more information as part of the calculation of
12 the season duration projections, you would get different results.
13 That said, it's important to remember that that middle column in
14 Table 2.2.1 is looking at, you know, that center of the
15 distribution there for 2021 to 2023, but, under all of those
16 scenarios, there exists the possibility, based on the history of
17 effort, for a closure, and that's represented by that upper 95
18 percent boundary for that three-year average.
19

20 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I guess my question then is, if we're using the
21 landings over five years to look at the allocations, why wouldn't
22 we use that same timeframe for the season projections?
23

24 **MR. RINDONE:** We could. We could update it for that, if that was
25 the preference. Typically, we've just -- It's a SERO practice to
26 use the most recent three years when they're trying to project
27 when a fishing season might close, and so then, obviously, along
28 the way, to the extent that it's possible, and depending on the
29 species, you know, they keep an eye on things as the season
30 progresses.
31

32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Sanchez.
33

34 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. I'm leaning towards
35 Alternative 4, and the reason is it kind of looks at the recent
36 landings, yet it gives everybody the same haircut, and I don't
37 know what could be more fair kind of than that.
38

39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Banks.
40

41 **DR. BANKS:** I understand that logic, but I'm looking at a 10
42 percent allocation to the rec sector. I don't think that's too
43 much to ask, and so I'm leaning toward Alternative 3, just because,
44 I mean, that's not that much of the allocation, and so I'm happy
45 to make a motion, unless there's more discussion.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.
48

1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, but, to that point, Dr. Banks, this has
2 historically been mostly a commercial fishery, right? Like a vast
3 majority of these landings have been on the commercial side, and
4 so they're definitely going to be the ones that are most impacted,
5 and, if you go towards, you know, Alternative 3 that you're
6 highlighting, the average commercial landings would be 137 percent
7 of the proposed option, and so, in one capacity or another, someone
8 is going to be getting hit over the head a little bit harder than
9 the other. That's why I'm kind of with John, because -- In terms
10 of Alternative 4, because it does kind of equal it across the
11 sectors there, but I do understand where you're coming from.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any other thoughts? So, again, you don't have
14 to necessarily pick a preferred today, but we would certainly like
15 one tomorrow on Full Council. If you want to make one, you can,
16 but you might benefit from some public comment. Dr. Banks.

17
18 **DR. BANKS:** To that point, I think we made that same statement
19 last meeting, and so I think maybe it might benefit the public if
20 we had a preferred going into public comment. I think we said the
21 same thing last time, that we'll get public comment to sway us.

22
23 **MR. RINDONE:** You did.

24
25 **DR. BANKS:** We're still at the same point, and so okay.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J.

28
29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, and sorry to interrupt Dr. Banks. So,
30 I mean, my question here is that, at the last meeting, I probably
31 got a little too upset about having to navigate some of these
32 allocation decisions with PSEs that are through the freaking roof,
33 that NOAA's own guidance says we shouldn't use, and we're using
34 them to determine allocations.

35
36 Andy, not to put you on the spot here, but I think, at the last
37 meeting, you said that you were hopeful to come up with some
38 innovative ideas to try and navigate some of this here, given the
39 uncertainty of these estimates here that we're using to set up
40 allocations. I don't see any changes from the previous document,
41 and so I'm wondering if you had any insight there.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, no additional insights. We, obviously,
46 talked about and included the new accountability measure, right,
47 which looks at a multiyear average, which is intended to smooth
48 out some of that uncertainty that would happen from one year to

1 the next, but, when you have low sample sizes, and, you know,
2 higher uncertainty around the landings estimates, it's really hard
3 to, you know, generate estimates of allocation and landings that
4 you feel confident in, and so that's what we're basing, obviously,
5 our decisions off of, is the landings data we have, with the
6 uncertainty around it.

7
8 I think the accountability measures help to at least address some
9 of the monitoring that would come along with any sort of catch
10 limits imposed.

11
12 While I have the mic, one of the things that I will maybe just
13 add, and I don't know if we'll get to a preferred alternative here
14 or not, and I would recommend you do recommend a preferred, but,
15 in the rationale, remember we have to look at National Standard 4
16 and determine what is, you know, considered fair and equitable,
17 and so you really need to build your argument around why is this
18 fair and equitable to allocate the fishery between the commercial
19 and recreational sectors, based on whatever allocation percentage
20 you choose.

21
22 I heard some discussion of, obviously, the recreational sector
23 remaining open for a longer period of time. That gives me pause,
24 in terms of using that as the sole basis for your rationale, and
25 so I just would encourage you to build that record further with
26 regard to the differences amongst these alternatives and why they
27 would be viewed as fair and equitable, wherever you land with the
28 preferred.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Andy. Mr. Sanchez.

31
32 **MR. SANCHEZ:** In the interest of, I guess, doing something, moving
33 forward, I would make a motion that, for Action 2, we pick
34 Alternative 4 as the preferred, and then let's see what shakes out
35 in public comment. If we're swayed to do something different,
36 then so be it, but I think it's a fair approach to it. Everybody
37 gets the same haircut, and that's why I like it.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, John, and so we've got a motion on
40 the board, and it's seconded by Mr. Anson. Bernie, we'll let you
41 get that up there. All right, and so the motion is, in Action 2,
42 to make Alternative 4 the preferred.

43
44 I imagine there's different views on this, and so I'm going to ask
45 for a little more discussion, if there is any interest in doing
46 that, and, if not, then we'll probably take a vote by hand. Captain
47 Walker.

1 **MR. WALKER:** I'm going to disagree with the motion. I prefer
2 Alternative 3, and, to Andy's point, for justification for that,
3 there's been a lot of changes in the fishery. There's a lot more
4 rec folks going out there with electric reels, deep dropping and
5 all that, and so I don't think it's unreasonable to use the most
6 current catch history, if you will.
7
8 Also, I don't know that, you know, 90 percent commercial and 10
9 percent recreational would really be considered inequitable to the
10 commercial side. You know, they're getting 90 percent of it. A
11 couple points over to the rec side might keep their season open
12 all year, whereas it's just a handful more quota on the commercial
13 side, and so, to me, Alternative 3 is more preferable than
14 Alternative 4.
15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Dr. Banks.
17
18 **DR. BANKS:** So John scooped me, but I would offer a substitute
19 motion, when you're ready.
20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am ready.
22
23 **DR. BANKS:** All right. **I would like to make. In Action 2,**
24 **Alternative 3 the preferred.** If I'll get a second, I'll echo.
25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Is there a second? Seconded by Mr.
27 McDermott, and so the substitute motion is, in Action 2, to make
28 Alternative 3 the preferred. Okay. We've had some rationale and
29 justification for the original motion.
30
31 Is there any additional rationale? Any further discussion on this
32 motion? I don't see any. **All of those in favor, raise your hand**
33 **on the substitute motion.** How many folks do we have online,
34 Bernie? We're just going to have to go through and ask them one
35 at a time.
36
37 Again, for those folks online, so we have a substitute motion,
38 right, which is, in Action 2, to make Alternative 3 the preferred.
39 We have seven folks online, and, Bernie, if you just want to read
40 off their names, we'll get a vote from each one of them, and I'm
41 asking for a yes or no.
42
43 **MS. ROY:** Billy Broussard.
44
45 **MR. DUGAS:** Mr. Broussard's mic is not working.
46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Can he hear though?
48

1 **MS. ROY:** Go ahead. I unmuted you, Billy.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Can he text you his vote?
4
5 **MS. ROY:** Billy, if you can hear me, put your hand up if you would
6 like to vote for this one. Hand is up. Okay.
7
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Frady, yes or no on the substitute
9 motion?
10
11 **MR. FRADY:** Yes.
12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Schieble.
14
15 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes.
16
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Overton.
18
19 **DR. OVERTON:** Yes.
20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Geeslin.
22
23 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes.
24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Nine. Mr. Williamson.
26
27 **MS. ROY:** Mr. Williamson's hand is up.
28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So that was ten in favor that I had.
30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** **All those opposed. Okay. The substitute motion**
32 **carried ten to two with five abstentions. Four abstentions and**
33 **one absent.** All right, and so we will go ahead then and move on
34 to Action Item 3. Mr. Rindone. Ms. Levy.
35
36 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. A couple of things. One, I just encourage
37 you to think of some additional potential rationale for Full
38 Council, if this alternative moves forward, focusing on the method,
39 as opposed to the result, which I did hear a little bit about more
40 recent being appropriate, but maybe there's some other things we
41 can say about why looking only at the most recent five years is
42 the fair and equitable way to go and is reasonably calculated to
43 promote conservation.
44
45 Then, with respect to the 4 percent buffer, I'm afraid I'm going
46 to confuse things, but I'm going to throw this out there anyway.
47 We're talking about removing the 4 percent buffer potentially in
48 the shallow-water grouper document. We're not removing it here,

1 because this is going to go first, right, and we don't want to
2 make the decision here, which is fine, but I think we can build in
3 some discussion in this action about the potential removal in 58A.
4

5 If that were to occur, the expectation would be that any final
6 rule implementing that 58A would adjust the deepwater grouper quota
7 consistent with getting rid of that 4 percent, and so we don't
8 have to go back in, right, and it will be automatic. If you decide
9 in 58A to remove that, the agency can update the deepwater grouper
10 catch limits to reflect that when we do 58A, and so I just wanted
11 to note that here, that I think we can add that discussion to this
12 action.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** To that point, Ryan?
15

16 **MR. RINDONE:** We said we were going to do that, and so --
17

18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mara. All right, and so we
19 have an alternative, or preferred, in Action 2, and so we'll move
20 on to Action 3. Ryan.
21

22 **MR. RINDONE:** Action 3 is accountability measures. Currently, if
23 the total complex ACL is exceeded in a fishing year, then, in the
24 following fishing year, Andy will close the recreational sector
25 for the remainder of the year if the sum of the commercial and
26 recreational landings reaches or is projected to reach the total
27 complex ACL.
28

29 Just a note here that is important is it directs NMFS to close the
30 recreational sector only if the sum of the recreational and
31 commercial landings reaches or is projected to reach the complex
32 ACL.
33

34 The IFQ system means that the commercial sector fishes throughout
35 the year, all the way up to December 31, and so whether this would
36 actually need to be triggered wouldn't be known until after the
37 fishing year was already over, and so it would require NMFS to
38 assume that the commercial sector is going to land all 100 percent
39 of their commercial quota, and that's not something that's
40 currently written into the regulations.
41

42 It's something that NMFS is supposed to do, as far as that
43 assumption goes, and so it makes implementing the accountability
44 measure, as it is right now, difficult.
45

46 Alternative 2 would revise the post-season recreational AM such
47 that, for the recreational sector, if the sector ACL is exceeded
48 in the fishing year, then, in the following fishing year, the

1 Regional Administrator would close the rec sector for the remainder
2 of the year when the rec ACL is projected to be met, and so a one-
3 year post-season accountability measure.

4
5 Alternative 3 would do the same thing, except that it would require
6 that both the recreational ACL and the total complex ACL be
7 exceeded, and then, if that happens in the following fishing year,
8 then the Regional Administrator would close the rec sector for the
9 remainder of the year if the rec ACL is projected to be met.

10
11 You guys currently prefer Alternative 4, and we discussed that
12 table a little bit already, about how that looks against the sector
13 allocation alternatives, and Alternative 4 says that, if the
14 average recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, and the
15 deepwater complex ACL is exceeded over a three-year moving period,
16 then the Regional Administrator would reduce the recreational
17 fishing season by the amount projected, such that the recreational
18 ACL would not be exceeded during the following fishing year, unless
19 the best scientific information suggests that no adjustment would
20 be needed.

21
22 Bernie, do you want to go back to that table with the red
23 highlighted cells, just so folks can have another look at that.
24 It is Table 3.3.1, and so then you guys can just take another look
25 at that, and, currently, you would be looking at that center stack
26 there of columns, assuming Alternative 3 in Action 2, and, based
27 on applying Alternative 4 in Action 3, in the last several years,
28 you would have had only a couple instances where the recreational
29 accountability measure would have been applied.

30
31 The way that this would work on implementation, and this is also
32 relevant, is it would be a one year -- For the year of
33 implementation, using one year of data, and then, two years after
34 implementation, two years, and then, three years after
35 implementation, and every year thereafter, it would use that three-
36 year moving average, and so, the year it's implemented, we wouldn't
37 be looking to previous landings prior to the regulation coming
38 into effect to interpret what the recreational season should be.
39 Does everyone understand that?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We do.

42
43 **MR. RINDONE:** Good.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right.

46
47 **MR. RINDONE:** So, absent any desire to modify this preferred
48 alternative, you guys would then have one for each of the actions,

1 Mr. Chair.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so is there any
4 appetite to revisit the preferred in this action item? Mr. Anson.

5
6 **MR. ANSON:** I understood the math, but I don't understand why the
7 previous landings wouldn't be included in analysis, Ryan, in that
8 one alternative.

9
10 **MR. RINDONE:** The regulatory environment prior to when the rule is
11 implemented wasn't affected by this rule, and so, in order to keep
12 everything on a level field, the way that the accountability
13 measure would work is that so, if it's implemented in 2026, it
14 would only rely on data from 2026, but, then in 2027, it would use
15 say 2026 and 2027, but it wouldn't use 2025, because the rule
16 didn't exist then, and so we wouldn't want to be interjecting
17 unknown management bias into it.

18
19 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You're very welcome. All right, and so, absent
22 any other questions, or comments, it looks like we have preferreds
23 for each of the three action items. We'll get some discussion
24 again in Full Council, and then we'll be able to, in Full Council
25 actually, recommend moving this forward for a public hearing draft,
26 and so all right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and if you might be so
27 kind as to work us through the next agenda item, at least the
28 action item for the discussion of the red grouper.

29
30 **DISCUSSION: RED GROUPEr DOCUMENTS**

31
32 **MR. RINDONE:** Can do, and so Dr. Allen is going to go back into
33 his SSC presentation and talk to you guys about revised catch
34 projections for red grouper, which now include 2025 and 2026 for
35 projecting future yields from the SEDAR 88 stock assessment. Prior
36 to this, 2025 and 2026 were marked as interim years.

37
38 SERO staff will then discuss the progress of an anticipated
39 timeline for the red grouper emergency rule that you guys requested
40 at your April meeting, and then, after that, council staff will
41 give you a brief presentation to outline actions and alternatives
42 to be considered for a plan amendment to modify red grouper catch
43 limits and sector allocations.

44
45 Sector allocations are being considered here because we have a
46 change in data unit, and, the last time we had a change in data
47 unit, sector allocations were reconsidered there too, and so we're
48 doing it again here. You guys should evaluate the information

1 presented, propose any necessary modifications, and make
2 recommendations to the council, as appropriate, and so we can lead
3 off with Mike.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Mike. Go ahead with the
6 SSC.

7
8 **DR. ALLEN:** All right. Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ryan.
9 Bernie, if you would just go to the last slide. There's just one
10 slide here. The SSC had a lengthy discussion about this, more
11 lengthy than I think any of us anticipated, and it was good.

12
13 It was -- There was concern from the economists on the committee
14 about the effects of the increased ABC on the effects of that on
15 the IFQ program, and that's going to be a topic that we actually
16 look for a more general presentation about that in the future to
17 the SSC, so we can talk about that more, but, ultimately, after
18 the discussion, we voted to support the three-year projections to
19 allow the council to move forward with an emergency rule.

20
21 The motion was -- I'll read it aloud. The SSC recommends the
22 three-year projections from 2025 to 2027 to calculate an average
23 OFL and ABC, giving a constant catch for the OFL at 10.64 million
24 pounds gutted weight and the ABC at 8.28 million pounds gutted
25 weight. The SSC recommends prioritizing interim analyses and other
26 pertinent evaluations of the stock on an annual basis, just to try
27 to evaluate how this is going, if it's implemented, and that motion
28 carried twelve to five, with two absent, and the five no votes
29 were -- My sense were they were mainly around the economic
30 implications of this, but it did carry with the sound majority,
31 and so that was our discussion. I'm happy to take any questions.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thank you, Dr. Allen. I think Mr.
34 Sanchez has a few comments, or questions.

35
36 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and kind of both. I want to thank you for your
37 role in chairing that meeting, and running through a lot of
38 information in a condensed amount of time, and keeping things
39 moving. I know that's probably very challenging, but I do have
40 some reservations, or concerns, with the dramatic difference
41 between the prior assessment and this one.

42
43 I mean, I just really don't believe that the red grouper age
44 structure can support a 60 percent increase or so in harvest
45 levels, and support long-term sustainability simultaneously, and
46 so I understand that the optics of this to the public might very
47 well be, you know, we finally get a good assessment, and now you
48 have concerns. Well, the reason why is, as overly optimistic

1 perhaps as I perceive this assessment to be with respect to red
2 grouper, I also have concerns with how overly pessimistic the gag
3 and scamp groupers were, in my opinion.

4
5 The reasons I believe are -- I understand completely, and I
6 capitulate that things evolve, and maybe there's new ways, inputs,
7 to put into these assessments over time that present themselves,
8 the evolution of science if you will, but they're so inconsistent
9 from one to the next that I almost feel that, if we were to use
10 some of the same inputs into all of our hermaphroditic, or
11 hermaphrodite, species, I would maybe get my arms around these
12 differences, which are kind of radical. By that, I mean our
13 approach to males versus egg-bearing in red grouper versus gag.

14
15 I'm also concerned about, recently, we did some assessments with
16 a different look at natural mortality. I don't know that that
17 would have a dramatic change in any of this, but I would like to
18 see this be uniformly applied. Maybe it's the newer evolved
19 method, and I think it's Copeland and some others.

20
21 Maybe apply the scamp and the gag with the same thing and see what
22 we get, at the next, you know, opportunity to do so, so that we're
23 looking at these things somewhat more uniformly, and then, of
24 course, I don't think scamp as subjected to red tide threats,
25 perhaps, as I believe gag and red grouper to be, but the same, you
26 know, approach and recent analysis used to evaluate red tide, and
27 let's apply it to all of them, and let's kind of get some
28 consistency going here, so that maybe, you know, this one isn't
29 overly pessimistic, and this one is overly optimistic, because we
30 kind of did this in 2015.

31
32 We did this in an assessment for red grouper, where we blew it up,
33 and opened up harvest dramatically, only to find, a few years later
34 that, oh it wasn't a great idea. I would like to think we learned
35 something over time.

36
37 With that said, I guess the only way forward, and we have an
38 emergency rule, and, you know, I don't know where we're at
39 procedurally with that, but, at 90 percent and all this, you know,
40 maybe let it go, but there's concerns where I'm going ultimately
41 with this, when we do the amendment. that will follow post-
42 emergency rule, is it might be, you know, closing the barn door
43 after the horses have left, but I would like to see a staggered
44 approach in the amendment, some action items for consideration,
45 where we have graduated ACL buffers and we turn it loose over time.

46
47 I would say like, you know, for discussion, and I'm not much
48 married to these percentages, and we can, as a team, arrive at

1 them, you know, as a group, but like maybe year-one is 70 percent,
2 year-two is an 80 percent buffered ACL, year-three is 90, the whole
3 while really looking at the landings and making sure we're not
4 propelling this fishery back into a rebuilding struggle. I have
5 some concerns that it's overly -- It's unrealistic, to me. Thank
6 you.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.

9
10 **DR. SWEETMAN:** You hit on a lot there, John. I'm not sure I fully
11 agree with you, relative to the way we look at grouper species in
12 the same exact way. I mean, you even said kind of scamp is not
13 prone to red tide similar to gag or red grouper, and, even between
14 those species, there's differences there, and that's why I do think
15 it's appropriate to not have broad strokes across the board, just
16 to kind of get things on the same playing field.

17
18 They're not necessarily -- They're different species. Even though
19 they are hermaphroditic groupers, they have different pressures
20 that are associated with them, and so I'm not sure I'm on the same
21 page with you there.

22
23 I will say, I mean, at our last meeting, I think we highlighted
24 our preference for using a 10 percent buffer between the ABC and
25 the ACL. It sounds like you're not comfortable with that level.

26
27 There certainly were other options that were on the table that
28 were at a lower -- You know, a higher buffer, if you will, and so
29 I think that's a possible option that we could consider, if -- You
30 know, that's certainly within the council's purview for management
31 risk policy, and so I think that could mitigate a lot of your
32 concerns there, but what you just referenced there is something a
33 little bit different, in terms of a step-wise approach to that
34 buffer.

35
36 Maybe that complexity isn't necessary, if we just set a lower
37 buffer, but, I mean, if that's something that you're adamantly
38 for, I mean, I would certainly like to hear more about it.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. John, to that point, and then Dr. Banks,
41 and then Mr. Strelcheck.

42
43 **MR. SANCHEZ:** To that point, you know, I'm more destination
44 oriented. I don't want to go backwards in this fishery, and I
45 suspect we may do that with this, you know, 60 percent or so
46 increase, and so how we get there really isn't a concern to me. I
47 just threw out an idea. If there's another way to get to the same
48 destination, I don't much care, and I'm all ears.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Banks.

3
4 **DR. BANKS:** I just had a quick clarifying question. I think this
5 is to Andy. The emergency rule, would it only be focused on rec
6 this year, and IFQ? It's both? Okay, and so we're talking about
7 pushing out shares as well this year? Okay. Thank you.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

10
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, in response to John's comments, we had a
12 chance to talk on the phone a few weeks back, and, just to remind
13 the council, right, it's within your purview, in terms of where
14 you set the catch limits, and you have to set it equal to or less
15 than the ABC, and so what John is suggesting, and I told him over
16 the phone, is -- It's certainly within the range of alternatives
17 this council can consider, in terms of where you set red grouper.

18
19 What I would just encourage, and recommend, is we have to move
20 very quickly on this particular amendment, in order to get it in
21 place for 2026, because the emergency rule is going to expire at
22 the end of this year, and so we will have to have new regulations
23 then in place following this, and so any alternatives that want to
24 be floated as part of that range of consideration, in terms of
25 setting the ACL with greater buffers, or a step-wise buffer
26 process, really need to happen as soon as possible.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and, to that point, I was just talking to
29 John, Andy, right, and so, when I was looking at the kind of the
30 newest, or updated, action schedule, so, based on the discussion
31 we have at this meeting, then there will be a draft of the
32 amendment, or the document, in August, right, and that will be
33 used for a public hearing draft, and then, in November, you had
34 planned to bring it back, and I'm assuming for final action, right?
35 Not quite that fast? Public hearing in November, and then a final
36 action in January? Okay. Gotcha.

37
38 I guess what I'm hearing about the discussion here is that, with
39 regard to the buffer, right, as you're drafting the document, that
40 we probably need to be thinking about some alternatives in that
41 space. C.J.

42
43 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Maybe someone can refresh my memory for the other
44 buffer alternatives that we had there, but it sounded like John
45 was thinking of something that was a little outside what we had
46 previously discussed, and so, if we wanted to consider that as an
47 option, John, I guess I would ask you put an option forward there
48 along those lines.

1
2 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Okay. I'll try to work on some language.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I think -- Well, is there any more
5 discussion, or questions, for Mike about the SSC's part of this?
6 Mr. McDermott.
7
8 **MR. MCDERMOTT:** I may have missed it, but what was the discussion
9 about the economic concerns of the IFQ?
10
11 **DR. ALLEN:** The discussion there was how it's going to affect the
12 share prices when you put this much additional quota on the
13 fishery. That was the issue, and kind of the unknown implications
14 of that at the time.
15
16 **MR. MCDERMOTT:** What were you all thinking is going to happen?
17
18 **DR. ALLEN:** I think it was uncertainty in what would happen. I
19 think that's the question, is that dumping that much quota on the
20 fishery would change the share prices and influence people's
21 businesses.
22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker.
24
25 **MR. WALKER:** So that can be looked at a couple of different ways,
26 depending on your perspective. To some people, low allocation
27 prices are a bad thing, and, to a lot of fishermen, low allocation
28 prices are a benefit. In fact, we've been discussing, in this
29 room a lot, how to -- What we can do to help fishermen get
30 allocation prices down, and so, in my view, the council's concern
31 is not the price of, you know, maintaining high allocation prices.
32
33 Like if you consider a guy that has a thousand pounds of red
34 grouper that he owns, and you give him another thousand, that's a
35 good thing to that fisherman. That is not a bad thing. Adding
36 more quota to a guy's account is not a bad thing, in my view. You
37 know, like I said, there's different perspectives that you can
38 look at this.
39
40 If you're a big, giant shareholder, you don't want your allocation
41 price to go down, perhaps, and so, you know, in discussions on
42 that, I would just recommend to think about it from two different
43 angles here. You know, a low allocation price is not a bad thing,
44 in my view.
45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Ed, for those comments. Mr. McDermott.
47
48 **MR. MCDERMOTT:** Ed, you might be able to answer this, but, I mean,

1 if we're concerned about the price, or the value, of the share
2 decreasing or increasing, I mean, does the ex-vessel price follow
3 that, or how does that work?
4

5 **MR. WALKER:** Not really. I mean, it depends on the species you're
6 talking about, but red snapper, where I'm at, pays seven-dollars,
7 regardless of how much you paid for the allocation. I guess
8 though, if you dumped hundreds of thousands of pounds of red
9 grouper on the market, and more people were out there, it might
10 produce a glut of fish hitting the dock, which could bring the
11 price down a little bit, I think, but it depends on how much, but
12 they still have to catch that amount of fish, and so I don't think
13 it's a major concern, no.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Sanchez.
16

17 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you, and, you know, again, Ed just started to
18 touch on that too, that not only does it affect the share price,
19 but, when you flood the market, it affects the price per pound,
20 but, beyond that, if you look at, again, that 2015 scenario, what
21 history taught us, that I guess we're forgetting, is, when then
22 the fishery gets pounded, because it was just turned loose, and
23 then everything crashes, and then people fall by the wayside, and,
24 when it comes back, everything skyrockets again, and so you're
25 back to high share prices, high this, high that, and so, I mean,
26 we've seen this movie.
27

28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Freeman.
29

30 **DR. FREEMAN:** Some of the conversation -- I mean, it had more to
31 do with the timing of when this occurred, whether it was mid-year
32 or the beginning of the year. Certainly if there's an increase,
33 that will affect share prices, regardless.
34

35 The conversation, from some of the economists on the SSC, was that
36 they had reservations about the prices that people paid earlier
37 this year, whereas, if there's a change, due to this emergency
38 rule, people who might have purchased at the beginning of this
39 year might not see the same price as if they had waited, and so
40 that was more the concern, again, rather than, okay, if it's at
41 the start of the year, people might make different business
42 decisions.
43

44 I will add that it seemed like most of the conversation still,
45 understandably, based off the landings was also revolving around
46 impacts on the commercial sector, and not necessarily taking into
47 account any potential benefits as well to the recreational sector
48 for those increases.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and you're right. I do remember a number
3 of those conversations, right, and, I mean, as an IFQ fishery in
4 a whole year, you wouldn't be expected to flood the market, because
5 that's the whole point of the IFQ program, to kind of regulate
6 that, just dumping those fish later in the year, perhaps, right,
7 was the concern, and so all right. Any other -- Dr. Simmons.

8
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, just
10 before we leave the SSC report, just to kind of wrap-up and just
11 tell everybody some of the moving parts that are happening, and I
12 think there was a request, after that SSC meeting, that we have a
13 group get together and talk about what information may be relevant
14 to bring back at some point, as far as education, where we are
15 with the review, understanding of, you know, interim or late
16 release of allocation, and some of those implications, at some
17 point, when we can get it on the agenda. That was a request. We
18 are trying to work on that, when we have some stability in our
19 funding.

20
21 The other thing I just wanted to kind of remind folks of, that's
22 also on our tasks, and it goes to what I think Mr. Sanchez was
23 asking that we do, and that was -- Just to remind everybody, you
24 tasked us, in April, to form that working group with members of
25 the Gulf and South Atlantic SSC to collectively address best
26 practices for estimating steepness, and that's the MSY for
27 management advice, as well as discussion of SPR proxy values, given
28 a range of life history values among fish species.

29
30 That is on our list. For the Gulf, we have started a process with
31 the Science Center staff in documenting essentially what we've
32 done as we've gone through this process with the status
33 determination criteria, as far as what the SSC is recommending for
34 recruitment, that kind of stuff, and those levels based on life
35 history, and then for the projections, and try to come up with a
36 checklist, I think is the way we were talking about it, but that's
37 still a work in progress, but those are all things I think we're
38 doing that could help kind of keep us in the frame of what we've
39 done, where we're going, and where we need to be, I guess, in the
40 future, and so hopefully that made sense.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Carrie. All right, and so last call for
43 questions for the SSC. Mike, you're off the hook. I think the
44 next thing to do is to go to SERO and talk a little bit about the
45 emergency rule.

46
47 **MR. HELIES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the council request
48 from the last meeting. We just discussed that at length, and the

1 council requested that the stock ACL be established in an emergency
2 rule, set to 90 percent of the ABC, and do not adjust any other
3 management measures, such as sector allocations or fishing
4 seasons, anything like that.

5
6 There's a brief typo in this, and the sector allocation percentages
7 are off by a few percentages, and that will result in about a
8 10,000-pound difference between the two. We're looking at 90
9 percent of the proposed ABC is 7.45 million pounds. The commercial
10 ACL would be 4.42 million pounds, and there's a 5 percent buffer
11 between the commercial ACL and the ACT, and so it would be 4.20
12 million pounds, and the rec ACL would be 3.02, which is 40.7
13 percent of the stock ACL, and that's -- The recreational ACT would
14 be 2.75 million pounds, which is a 9 percent buffer.

15
16 For the last, the 2024 red grouper recreational season and
17 commercial season, the ACT for commercial was 2.79 million pounds,
18 and the final landings were about 2.52 million pounds, which is 91
19 percent of the quota. For the recreational sector, the ACL was
20 2.02, and the ACT was 1.84. The season was January 1 through June
21 30, and the recreational landings were monitored in FES. We did
22 exceed the ACL, at 2.266 million pounds, which was 112 percent of
23 the ACL.

24
25 For 2025, and this is assuming that the emergency rule goes into
26 place, the rec landings will be monitored in the SRFS units,
27 instead of MRIP-FES, at least for the private, and so we would
28 predict that no closure would be necessary for 2025, if the
29 emergency rule gets put in place, and so questions right now? My
30 team is making good progress on the rule. We anticipate it
31 publishing no earlier than July 5, in order to get that 180 days
32 effectiveness through the end of the year, and so that's what our
33 target date is for the current.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Frank. Dr. Sweetman.

36
37 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No questions. Good job, Frank.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any other comments, or questions? Dr. Simmons.

40
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can you remind
42 me how we got the 5 percent buffer again? Was that using the SRFS
43 landings for the recreational ACL to the ACT?

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** The SERO folks will circle back. Okay, and so
46 I guess we will go ahead and move on to Dr. Freeman, to see where
47 we are with regard to the development of this amendment.

48

1 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and so a relatively short presentation to prep
2 you all for a draft document for August. Bernie, if you can go to
3 the next slide, and so, as a reminder, with Reef Fish Amendment
4 53, and, you know, we've got some council members who were here at
5 that time.

6
7 If you recall, we visited red grouper allocation between the two
8 sectors, based on the most recent stock assessment and change in
9 data units, and so there would be a similar action in this
10 document, where we would be shifting to use of SRFS data, which is
11 what was used for the private angling component with SEDAR 88. As
12 a result, the council can consider using that SRFS data to inform
13 and modify the sector allocations.

14
15 Some additional background, the current recreational
16 accountability measures, there's both in-season and post-season
17 AMs that apply to harvest by the rec sector. In-season requires
18 NMFS to close the recreational sector when red grouper landings
19 reach or are projected to reach ACL.

20
21 Then, if landings do exceed the red grouper ACL in a fishing year,
22 the post-season AM requires NMFS to shorten the length of the
23 following fishing year by the amount necessary to ensure landings
24 do not exceed the ACT, and then, if red grouper is overfished,
25 NMFS must also reduce ACL and ACT by the amount of overage in that
26 prior year.

27
28 A quick visual of landings from 1986 to 2024 for the commercial
29 and recreational sector. The recreational landings are in SRFS,
30 and then we have the total landings as well.

31
32 Action 1 is to modify sector allocations, OFL, ABC, ACLs, and ACTs
33 for red grouper. I tried, and I wasn't able to fit any other
34 abbreviations into that.

35
36 Alternative 1 would maintain the 59.3 commercial and 40.7 percent
37 recreational split and then maintain the current OFL, ABC, and
38 ACLs. Alternative 2 retains the sector percentages from Reef Fish
39 53, but then revises the OFL and ABC, as recommended by the SSC,
40 based on the SEDAR 88 stock assessment, and then the stock ACL
41 would be set equal to the stock ABC.

42
43 Alternative 3 would revise the sector allocations between the two
44 sectors, using SRFS data, for the years 1986 through 2005, and,
45 just as a reminder, those are the years that were used with Reef
46 Fish 53.

47
48 The resulting allocations would be 67.4 percent commercial and

1 32.6 percent recreational. We would have to make a request for
2 this alternative and the following alternatives to the Science
3 Center to receive the values for OFL and ABC, and then we could
4 calculate out the ACLs and ACTs.

5
6 Alternative 4, again, uses SRFS data, in this case from 1986
7 through 2009. That results in a very similar allocation as what
8 is seen in Alternative 3, with it being 68.4 percent commercial
9 and 31.6 percent recreational.

10
11 Alternative 5 would, again, revise, in this case looking at a
12 longer time period from 1986 through 2024, excluding 2020. That
13 would again result in a very similar allocation as what we saw
14 with Alternatives 3 and 4, in this case, 67.8 percent commercial
15 and 32.2 percent recreational.

16
17 We've got a summary slide of the resulting allocations from those
18 alternatives. I will add that we also looked -- If we were to
19 consider the most recent ten years, just again thinking outside
20 the box, and so 2015 to 2024, for the commercial sector, resulted
21 in 67.19 percent and rec at 32.81 percent, and so, again, following
22 very much in line with what's being seen in Alternatives 3 through
23 5.

24
25 This one shows, for Alternative 1, the current OFL, ABC, and then
26 the ACLs and ACTs, in MREP-FES and equivalent of those values in
27 SRFS. Then it also provides the SSC's recommendation, with
28 Alternative 2, and, again, that's using SRFS data. As I mentioned,
29 Alternatives 3 through 5, if those are allocations that the
30 committee and council would like for us to retain and pursue, we
31 would have to request those values.

32
33 Mr. Chair, I can move forward to Action 2, or, if folks would like
34 to discuss current alternatives, if -- Again, there's a number of
35 them that are very close, and so, if there's any that folks may
36 want to remove at this point, we could do so, and so, Bernie, do
37 you mind moving back just one slide? So, like I said, Alternatives
38 3 through 5, as well as that ten years of most recent data, showed
39 very similar percentages, but I'll pause there, if there's any
40 conversation. If not, I can -- I'll move forward, but I'll pause
41 there.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.

44
45 **DR. SWEETMAN:** My question is for Ms. Levy. I'm trying to factor
46 in these allocations here relative to what's going on with the
47 court case for red grouper and kind of what's been determined
48 there.

1
2 **MS. LEVY:** Not directly. I think all of these are, you know,
3 available to you to discuss. They're not -- They're related, in
4 that we would be changing what happened, like because we did 53,
5 but they're not necessarily relevant on their own.

6
7 We might need to address certain aspects of the remand potentially
8 in the discussion here, depending on what the agency decides to do
9 on the remand. So I don't really have -- I don't think it implicates
10 your discussion at this point regarding these allocation
11 alternatives. Can I ask a question?

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You may.

14
15 **MS. LEVY:** On the next slide, so the Alternative 1 SRFS equivalent,
16 and so the OFL is lower than the MRIP-FES, but all of the other
17 ones are higher. How is -- I guess I'm not understanding that.
18 How is the ABC for the SRFS equivalent higher than the MRIP-FES
19 ABC?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I'll wait, but I would just presume that you may
22 have a little more certainty in the SRFS information, and so that
23 allows you to increase that ABC relative to the OFL, but I don't
24 know that for sure.

25
26 **MS. LEVY:** Well, how did we calculate these equivalents, is what
27 I'm trying to figure out.

28
29 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I think we'll have to go back and take a look, but
30 I agree with you. I mean, so that SRFS equivalent wasn't redone,
31 per se. There was the issue, when we did the original one, and
32 there was that weight discrepancy, that I think led to a revision
33 in the stock assessment, and so I think we need to take a look at
34 that.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we'll come back to that, obviously,
37 in the next council meeting, as that document gets developed, and
38 so, Matt, if you want to go ahead and move to the next.

39
40 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, Bernie, if you can move forward one more, to
41 Action 2. Perfect. Action 2 would modify the February through
42 March recreational shallow-water grouper closure. Alternative 1
43 would retain the February 1 through March 31 recreational closed
44 season on shallow-water grouper in federal waters seaward of the
45 twenty-fathom boundary.

46
47 Alternative 2 would eliminate that February 1 through March 31
48 recreational closed season, and, again, that was a request by the

1 council previously. I made a note at the bottom, and so that was
2 most recently modified back in 2012, where "shoreward" was removed.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Captain Walker.

5
6 **MR. WALKER:** I assume it was, but this closure -- Was this figured
7 into the scamp shallow-water seasons that we were talking about?

8
9 **DR. FREEMAN:** I believe staff said no, from our side. All right.
10 Not seeing any other questions, Bernie, if we'll move forward, and
11 so a possible action for consideration for the August meeting, and
12 we will have recreational season projections based on the catch
13 limits in Action 1. At that time, if the council would like, we
14 could consider an action to modify the recreational fishing season,
15 should it be projected to be less than a full year.

16
17 If we'll move forward one more slide, a tentative timeline would
18 be an August draft amendment, a November public hearing draft, and
19 January -- That's supposed to say 2026, but would be final action,
20 and so I will stop there and see if there's any questions.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Froeschke, and then Dr. Banks.

23
24 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Okay. Juust as a follow-up to Ms. Levy's question,
25 we looked at the May SSC report on page 5.

26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** That's the analysis from the Science
28 Center. That was the May agenda.

29
30 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Okay. It was on the analysis from the Science
31 Center, and, in here, it says -- The issue says that the OFL was
32 the -- Will you bring up that table? Sorry, Bernie. I'm just
33 going to read numbers at you, and just memorize them all. It's in
34 the presentation, that table with the alternatives. That one.

35
36 Okay, and so the OFL was the -- I'm talking Alternative 1, MRIP-
37 FES, and this is the OFL was 5.99 million pounds, and the ABC of
38 5.57 million pounds, which was adjusted down to 4.96 million pounds
39 gutted weight in the 2021 interim analysis, but that was -- I think
40 that number there, for the purposes of this comparison, it should
41 -- That 4.96 should be 5.57, which would then make the numbers
42 more sensical.

43
44 Then, while I'm talking, on this slide, one of the things that we
45 occasionally do with red grouper, and then we've done with gag, at
46 least the last time, is that, when we did the allocations, because
47 there's a little bit different selectivity, and we've gone back to
48 the SSC and said, okay, for each allocation, we want you to re-

1 estimate the OFL and ABC, and projections, and then that's why you
2 would get an OFL and an ABC contingent on every single one. We do
3 that for red grouper in the past, and I think we've done it for
4 gag, and we already do it for other things.

5
6 I've had some conversations with the Science Center, and I think
7 it would be best if they would speak to it, and I don't know
8 exactly what they would say, but one idea, in terms of making this
9 move -- If the differences in those OFLs among those alternatives
10 are not large, we could just use the OFL, the 10.64, and the ABC
11 of the 8.28, for the other alternatives and compute the
12 allocations, based on what you all want to see, avoid going back
13 to the SSC and getting new projections, requesting new projections
14 from the Science Center, and all of that stuff, in order to
15 facilitate this.

16
17 I mean, we've had some conversations, and I don't think the
18 differences in OFL or ABC seem prohibitively large, and so that
19 might be a reasonable path forward, given the accelerated timeline
20 that we already find ourselves on.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Do you want the Science Center to weigh-in on
23 this? Is Clay or John on the call?

24
25 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Yes, and I was raising my hand and waiting to be
26 called, but I'll just jump in. I think we're fine with that
27 strategy. I don't think the difference is enough to be especially
28 concerned about, given all the other types of uncertainties we
29 have.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Clay. Ms. Levy.

32
33 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I guess I have a question related to that, maybe
34 for Clay. Well, so does that mean you've done these alternate
35 projections? I mean, I guess I'm kind of confused. It's like we
36 don't need to do the projections, because the projections show
37 that it's not that much of a difference, and have we done these
38 projections and shown that the allocation doesn't change the OFL
39 and ABC very much?

40
41 **DR. PORCH:** I mean, it does change it much, but it's generally not
42 enough to worry about, compared to all the other sorts of
43 uncertainties one could consider. It ends up being a lot of extra
44 work, and I don't think it's necessary, and so we were okay with
45 the council pursuing that strategy.

46
47 **MS. LEVY:** But I guess I'm trying to understand how you know how
48 much it changes it without actually having done the projection.

1
2 **DR. PORCH:** I guess I could look up the exact number from when
3 we've done this in the past, but generally the difference that
4 we've seen are pretty minimal, and it's certainly within the range
5 of management error.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So Clay, I guess, to ask in a different way, I
8 mean, I think Mara is asking, if you haven't specifically run these
9 projections, right, but, based on that analysis in the past, then
10 the general pattern is that there's not a lot of difference, not
11 enough to worry about.
12

13 **DR. PORCH:** Generally, unless the selectivity between the
14 recreational fishery and the commercial is really, really
15 different, we don't see huge differences, but I don't have -- I
16 haven't seen the analyses done for this particular example, you
17 know, this particular assessment, but, in general, I think we want
18 to move away from trying to recompute the OFL based on -- The total
19 OFL based on a range of allocations.
20

21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks Clay. Mara is back in.
22

23 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and, I mean, I guess we can look at it more, but,
24 I guess -- I mean, I have some concerns, because, I mean, part of
25 what we did in 53 was we had the status quo allocation, and then
26 we changed it, and it did change the OFL and ABC, by what looks to
27 me not an insignificant amount, and so I guess I'm just -- If we
28 can somehow explain it particular to red grouper, based on past
29 experience, and it's a rational explanation about how we got there,
30 but I think we would need to -- I would actually need to see it
31 explained, and for red grouper in particular and not just an
32 abstract we've done it in the past type of thing.
33

34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.
35

36 **MR. RINDONE:** Clay, I think part of the reason for the lower level
37 of predicted change between the allocation options here is due to
38 the magnitude of overall change in the catch limits, and that some
39 of that difference in selectivity and retention is being washed
40 out by the larger amount of fish that are going to be available,
41 and is that correct?
42

43 **DR. PORCH:** It's probably a factor, but, I mean, the gist of it
44 is, yes, you'll calculate numbers that are different, but, within
45 the range of both scientific and management uncertainty, they're
46 pretty small, and we're starting to split hairs here.
47

48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I'm trying to figure out where we

1 are. Matt.

2
3 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, again, I would just ask that, if there's any
4 feedback -- Bernie, can you move forward one slide? Sorry.
5 Backwards. Backwards one more, and so, given those, if there's
6 any interest at this point in removing any alternatives, we're
7 open to that, or, likewise, if there's any additional alternatives
8 that the committee would like for us to explore, and that would be
9 helpful for us to know going into the August meeting.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Is there any appetite to propose any additional
12 alternatives? I am not seeing any. Here we've got a couple.
13 C.J., and then Mr. Strelcheck.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Not necessarily an addition, but to hopefully make
16 it easier for you, but the numbers in Alternatives 3, 4, and 5,
17 under Action 1, are all extremely similar, and Alternative 3 is by
18 far the most outdated of them, going from 1986 to 2005, and so
19 it's not inclusive of any of the twenty-one years, you know, twenty
20 years, since then, and so, I mean, if we had to remove an
21 alternative, to minimize the work on you guys, then that would
22 probably be my preference.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Strelcheck, but, Ms. Levy,
25 do you want to go?

26
27 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I mean, so Alternative 3 is doing what we did in
28 Amendment 53, and the reason that was selected was because the
29 rationale was we are changing data collection systems, and so we're
30 just updating what we've done, right? We changed from MRFSS, or
31 whatever, to MRIP-FES, and we just want to use the same years, and
32 update that, and now we're changing to SRFS.

33
34 So, I mean, I guess Alternative 3 seems, to me, to be the one that
35 is kind of in line with the historical decision-making, in that
36 you're just updating the data, and so you're going to use the same
37 time series. I guess I would just ask you to consider that.

38
39 Alternative 4 adds a couple more years, from 2005 to 2009. I mean,
40 I guess we could have a rationale that we're doing, in Alternative
41 4, what's done in Alternative 3, with some extra data, but I guess
42 I just want to make sure that that's understood, that Alternative
43 3 is really the historical original perspective that was updated
44 in Amendment 53.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.

47
48 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, Mara, does this

1 discussion not count as consideration of that, as far as whether
2 it should be kept in there and considered or not?

3
4 **MS. LEVY:** That's fine, but I guess I would just like, on the
5 record, an acknowledgement that we did something in particular in
6 Amendment 53, and we kept that same dataset on purpose, for a
7 reason. If we're not going to go further with it here, other than
8 it just being the oldest, you know, why would we not reconsider
9 it, based on the fact that we're now again changing the
10 recreational data?

11
12 Again, maybe it's because Alternative 4 covers it, with a couple
13 more years, and we think that's okay. I just didn't want it to
14 get thrown out now without the acknowledgement that the whole basis
15 for selecting it in Amendment 53 was to keep that original dataset
16 with only the updated recreational landings.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Sweetman.

19
20 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I guess, to that point, sure, and we add another
21 few years on top of that, but keeping something the same for
22 keeping it the same isn't good justification, from my perspective,
23 to keep something in, regardless of how it's been done in the past,
24 and so, I mean, sure, Alternative 4 adds a few years, and it keeps
25 that entire historical dataset. If that's what you're driving at
26 there, Mara, then sure, and I can see that too.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

29
30 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't feel strongly about any of the last three
31 alternatives. You know, we're challenged, obviously, when we're
32 looking at landings data for allocating, when you have catch limits
33 that have been in place and allocated for quite some time, right,
34 and so the Alternative 3 was based on, in my recollection, the
35 initial red grouper catch limits, or TACs, that were put in place
36 way back when.

37
38 Then Alternative 4 takes that up to pre-IFQ, and Alternative 5 is,
39 obviously, the IFQ years in an annual catch limit era, and that's
40 why you're not seeing a lot of difference, and change, I think,
41 with adding the last fifteen years, is because those have all been
42 under quota management, and it's capped, right, and so you're
43 essentially just looking at allocations based on fluctuations and
44 landings below or above the catch limits.

45
46 I will make the comment, with Alternative 5, and I saw that 2020
47 was excluded, but I don't think 2010 was excluded, and, to me,
48 that's a kind of an anomalous year that we've considered in the

1 past, with Deepwater Horizon, but I would lean toward keeping
2 Alternative 3, given Amendment 53 litigation, and possibly
3 dropping Alternative 4 or 5, one or the other.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Is there any appetite to propose removing
6 Alternative 4 or 5? I'm not seeing any. Matt, your workload
7 remains the same. Dr. Banks.

8
9 **DR. BANKS:** I have a quick question on the timeline. Bernie, if
10 you could go to the timeline slide, and I think we're scheduled to
11 take final action on this in January. We would transmit in
12 February, correct? I'm looking at maybe, or possibly. What is
13 the likelihood this would go into effect, or, I guess, how quick
14 could this go into effect in 2026?

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's a SERO question.

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, that's a great question. There
19 are some unknowns at this point, given a new administration and
20 more scrutiny, obviously, and review of rules. Timing-wise,
21 typically, we assume, you know, six months or so for rulemaking,
22 and so it would be, you know, a late summer timeframe to have
23 something in place, kind of similar to what we're doing this year.

24
25 **DR. BANKS:** So a likelihood, based on projections, and you may not
26 have an answer to this, of a closure in 2026, since we're trying
27 to put an emergency rule in 2025 to prevent a closure?

28
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I just don't want to speculate and get
30 hypothetical at this point, but that could be a potential,
31 depending on when we take final action and how long the rulemaking
32 would take.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, since we
37 brought up the timing, I mean, I think, like post haste we need to
38 figure out with the Science Center -- If the changes in allocation
39 are going to trigger a need to revisit the OFLs and ABCs, and
40 whether that has to go back to the SSC, because that will delay
41 our time and then getting that back to the council, and so, if we
42 could do that by tomorrow, and we can try.

43
44 We have been talking to staff there, but I don't know that they've
45 actually run the numbers that Ms. Levy was suggesting, but we have
46 tried to get ahead of this, as much as we can, to move this stuff
47 forward as quickly as possible, and so I think we need to figure
48 that out as soon as we can.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So you've been in contact with the center. Okay.
3 Andy.

4
5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Carrie, for bringing that up, and I'll
6 talk offline with Clay and John as well, but what Mara was raising,
7 and what we saw in Amendment 53, is, if you shifted the allocation
8 to the recreational sector, the OFL and ABC came down, right?

9
10 Obviously, the assessment has been updated, you know, and new data
11 information, and so I can't say for certain that this pattern would
12 hold true, but, if we're considering now alternatives where we
13 shift the allocation from the recreational sector to the commercial
14 sector, based on the new State Reef Fish Survey data, then my
15 expectation is the OFL and ABC would go up, and so we wouldn't
16 necessarily have to go back and do projections, because the current
17 OFL and ABC would be more conservative than those other options,
18 but I want to confirm that with the center, and we can talk about
19 that more tomorrow.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Matt, is there anything else you need
22 from us at this time?

23
24 **DR. FREEMAN:** I've got plenty. Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Glad that we can be helpful. All right, and so
27 the only other remaining agenda item is Other Business. Is there
28 any other business to come before the committee? I am not seeing
29 any, and so, Mr. Chairman, I'll turn it back to you.

30
31 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 3, 2025.)

32
33 - - -